Guide to Integrating Healthy Eating and Active Living into Colorado’s Rural and Small Town Communities
LiveWell Colorado is a nonprofit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado by promoting healthy eating and active living. Leading a comprehensive approach, LiveWell Colorado inspires and advances policy, environmental and lifestyle changes that aim to provide every Coloradan with access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity in the places they live, work, learn and play. LiveWell Colorado’s strategic partners and funders are The Colorado Health Foundation, Kaiser Permanente and the Kresge Foundation, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

For more information about LiveWell Colorado, visit www.livewellcolorado.org.

Acknowledgements

LiveWell Colorado thanks the many individuals and organizations who contributed to the ideas and recommendations in this document. We believe that your thoughtful input, feedback and overall wisdom has contributed to creating a document that will be used to inform the efforts of community advocates and planners and local and state agencies, policymakers, non-profit and foundations to increase access to healthy foods and physical activity in rural communities and small towns around Colorado, and beyond. Special thanks go to Wendy Peters Moschetti, WPM Consulting, LLC, for her work on this publication. A list of contributors can be found in Appendix A.
# Table of Contents

1. **Overview** ................................................................. 1  
   - Why We Created this Guide  
   - How to Use this Guide  
   - How We Developed this Guide

2. **Rural Context** .......................................................... 3  
   - The Many Faces of Rural Colorado  
   - The Built Environment in Rural and Small Towns  
   - Obesity in Rural Colorado  
   - Resource Constraints  
   - HEAL Challenges  
   - Scan of Initiatives and Common Themes  
   - State Agency Snapshot

3. **Local Action Strategies to Advance HEAL in the Built Environment** .......... 9  
   - Healthy Food Access ................................................. 11  
     - Identify, Preserve, and Promote Land for Human Food Production  
     - Make Every Kitchen a Community Kitchen  
     - Promote Healthy Food Retail of All Shapes and Sizes  
   - Physical Activity .................................................... 25  
     - Create Centers of Activity Through Existing Facilities  
     - Create Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Opportunities  
   - Mobility ................................................................. 35  
     - Build Trails that Support Regional Connections and Mobility  
     - Support Fun and Functional Biking

4. **State Recommendations** ............................................. 45

5. **Overarching Strategies** ............................................. 49

6. **Appendices** ............................................................ 53  
   - Appendix A - Acknowledgements and Key Informant Interviews  
   - Appendix B - Colorado Scan Resources

7. **Footnotes** ............................................................... 57
In 2009 and 2010 respectively, LiveWell Colorado published Food and Built Environment Policy Blueprints which assess current initiatives, recommend action strategies and provide overall direction for statewide efforts regarding specific policy topics. The Integrating “Healthy Eating and Active Living into the Built Environment” series builds on that work with a focus on the realities of specific geographic contexts in Colorado. This Guide is focused on the unique challenges of rural and small town communities in Colorado.

Why this Guide was Created

Colorado’s rural communities and small towns face two primary challenges to healthy eating and active living (HEAL) that warrant attention: significant health disparities and the lack of tools that are developed at an appropriate scale. As will be discussed in later sections of this Guide, some of Colorado’s highest rates of obesity and related diseases, lowest rates of physical activity and considerable challenges with access to fresh, healthy foods occur in rural Colorado. Additionally, there are a significant number of guides, models and tools for promoting health through the built environment, but the vast majority of them have emerged from highly urbanized areas and often do not reflect the reality, resources and capacity of rural areas and small towns in Colorado. There is simply a pressing need to understand the causes, challenges, and potential solutions behind geographic disparities.

LiveWell Colorado developed this Guide to provide background context and recommendations for community and state-level actions to improve access to healthy foods and active environments in Colorado’s diverse rural and small town communities. We hope that everyone who reads it will find some way in which they can engage in improving the health of these communities.

How to Use this Guide

It is evident that although Colorado has many different types of rural and small communities, there are strong common themes impacting their ability and capacity to incorporate HEAL into the built environment. This Guide provides some context around HEAL, obesity and the built environment in these communities and then proceeds to provide recommendations for action at the community level. Action strategies, resources and partners are provided around three categories: (1) healthy food access, (2) physical activity and (3) mobility. These recommendations are not intended to be prescriptive and every recommendation will not be relevant to every community; rather these recommendations should be adapted as appropriate for each unique community.

Support and leadership is needed at a variety of levels to make any of the recommendations mentioned in this Guide come to fruition and success. Therefore, State-Level Recommendations and Overarching Strategies are presented to guide LiveWell Colorado, its partners and the larger collective “we” to consider and address more systemic issues associated with HEAL and the built environment.

This Guide was developed to act as a menu – not a recipe - of strategies and actions intended to spark interest and action across the state to improve our built environment and, ultimately, the health of Coloradans. While this document can be read from beginning to end, it was designed so that each recommendation can stand alone and be pulled out to aid community-level planners, state organizations and agencies, as well as policymakers and advocates at all levels in their work.
How this Guide was Developed

This Guide is intended to be a “convergence of thought” from diverse partners across the state about the challenges and opportunities for promoting HEAL through built environment strategies in rural and small town Colorado. The development of this Guide involved: conversations with a wide range of stakeholders, an extensive literature review, a comprehensive scan of existing reports and constant vetting of common themes and recommendations. The specific methods used include:

- Key informant interviews with nearly 50 individuals from every corner of the state (and some from outside the state): from rural counties, to small towns, resort communities, local municipal staff, Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) regional managers, and state agency staff. Please see Appendix A for a complete list of those interviewed.
- Scan of existing surveys, community listening notes and assessments of rural Colorado for common themes and trends in what communities report doing, or would like to be doing, regarding access to healthy foods and active living through built environment changes. Please see Appendix B for a list of all reports scanned.
- Literature review of national research, reports and best practices regarding built environment projects in rural areas and small towns. Resource lists are woven in with each of the recommendations.
- Review and refinement of emerging findings and recommendations with diverse rural technical assistance providers, LiveWell communities and all key informant interviewees.

What is the Connection Between the Built Environment and Obesity?

The phrase “built environment” encompasses all buildings, spaces and products that are created, or modified, by people. The built environment has three distinct features:

1. The form and design of the physical elements that we build. Homes, schools, businesses, parks, sidewalks, trails, recreation facilities, libraries, gardens, and streets are just a few examples of what is built that defines communities, and ultimately provides the backdrop for choices people make that impact their health, both directly or indirectly.

2. How we distribute these elements across the landscape.

3. The type of connections we constructed to support our movements between these elements.

It is important to recognize the impact of the built environment and the roles played by city and regional agencies and organizations in providing access to healthy foods and public and green spaces (such as playgrounds, walking paths, etc.), which are determinants of physical activity and nutritious dietary practices. For example, the absence of a sidewalk, a lack of parks and trails, or the fact that a community may have too many fast food outlets and too few grocery stores that stock fresh fruits and vegetables can have a direct impact on an individual's choice to engage in physical activity or to eat healthy foods.

The Voices of Rural and Small Town Colorado

The spectrum of the many different faces of rural communities and small towns was reflected in key informant interviews. When asked to describe the rural and small communities where they live, work, and play, there were a wide range of responses, such as:

“we struggle in so many ways”

“a divided community, in terms of income, attitude, and resources”

“health is not a part of our culture”

“we are lucky to have a county seat AND a hospital in this town”

“we’re the number one ag county in the state!”

“we have national public lands that we all play in – our outdoor playground!”

“these days, you can work from anywhere, so why not here? The weather’s good, houses are affordable, and people are friendly.”
The Many Faces of Rural Colorado

The U.S. Census defines a rural area as one that includes persons living in the open country or in towns of less than 2,500 people. However, the Census definition is not universally used. The Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) defines any county with no towns whose population is greater than 50,000 as “Rural”. These are just two among a multitude of definitions. In reality, qualities that most clearly define a community may be less about the number of residents and more about the predominant industries and economies, its year-round population, proximity to freeways and metropolitan areas, as well as natural and physical amenities.

More than most other states, Colorado rural communities and small towns have many different faces due to varying geography, topography, climate and industry. For example, there are agricultural communities on the plains that vary significantly from agricultural communities on the Front Range, and even more so for those on the Western Slope. With Colorado’s population expected to nearly double by 2050, the majority of this growth will occur along the Front Range. Therefore, there are many developing communities that are currently small towns but in the near future will likely hold characteristics of suburban communities. There are also resort communities that are what they are because of active living – they are built around mountain biking, hiking, skiing, kayaking and other outdoor activities. Colorado is also a state characterized by natural resource extraction, which has resulted in boom and bust communities that experienced a period of economic prosperity followed by a depression. This list of examples is not all-encompassing. Readers are encouraged to read this with their own lens and glean the pieces that are most relevant to them.

The Built Environment in Rural and Small Towns

The “built environment” in rural communities and small towns faces very different realities than the policy and planning context held by urban and suburban environments. For example, land uses and development in a single rural community may range from agriculture to large-lot residential, commercial, resort, and large parcels of state and federal lands, to name a few. In addition, rural communities often face some of the following challenges to planning for and developing built environments that promote access to healthy eating and active living:

- Limited, centralized planning of land uses
- Sporadic (or “leapfrog”) housing or commercial developments with large spaces of agricultural, natural areas or vacant land between them
- Widespread commercial strip developments along major transportation corridors
- Low-density residential and commercial developments
- Dominance of the automobile as the means of transportation
- Aging or lack of infrastructure for biking, walking or recreation

Obesity in Rural Colorado

The built environment and the access to opportunities for physical activity and healthy foods has a significant impact on the health of rural and small towns in Colorado. The prevalence of adult obesity is notably higher in rural and frontier communities (ranging from 20-27%) than the 19.1% prevalence among the overall adult population (see Figure 2.1 – CO Adult Obesity by Region). It is also important to note that some of the counties with the highest obesity rates, such as Weld and Mesa counties, are labeled “urban” but contain distinctly rural environments outside of their one large municipality.
In general, Coloradans residing in the eastern regions, which are primarily rural and frontier communities, had a higher prevalence of adult obesity compared with Coloradans living in the Front Range and western Colorado regions. Specifically, the southeastern-most region of Colorado (Baca, Bent, Crowley, Huerfano, Kiowa, Las Animas, Otero and Prowers Counties) had the highest prevalence of adult obesity in the state. For a detailed overview of obesity, physical inactivity, and other health indicators across Colorado, please refer to http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/obesityreport.pdf.

Figure 2.1: Colorado Adult Obesity by Region (2009)

Nationally, the statistics are even more dire and the discrepancies between urban and rural environments are getting worse. Childhood obesity and inactivity are significant and growing problems in many rural areas where the prevalence of obesity and overweight has been shown to be 25 percent higher than urban rates, even after controlling for income, race, physical activity and other known risk factors. According to Rural Health Research & Policy Centers’ 2008 Health Disparities: A Rural – Urban Chartbook, residents in any rural county were more likely to report fair to poor health status than were residents of urban counties (19.5% v. 15.6%) and were more likely to be obese than were urban residents (27.4% v. 23.9%).

Resource Constraints

Several recent publications provide an in-depth examination of the current demographic, economic and built environment issues of rural and small town Colorado today. Collectively, these reports, sources and the current affairs in rural Colorado revealed a strong and growing interest in investing in local and regional food systems, parks, recreation facilities, trails and open space. At the same time, they recognize the confines of competing priorities, tight budgets, minimal staff and other limited resources. For example, the Land Use Survey found that the majority of counties with a population under 10,000 do not have all three key “planning resources “ (a planning commission, planning department and separate board of adjustment to review variance applications). The vast majority of these counties also do not currently use GIS. This is not to say that these services are not provided through a regional entity or contractor, but simply illustrate a common gap of internal planning resources.

The 2011 Colorado Municipal League’s State of Our Cities and Towns also revealed several issues that will affect when and how towns can focus resources on building for healthy eating and active living. For example, only 26% of towns under 4,000 people have dedicated staff for economic development activities. Financially, these towns continue to face multiple challenges, with only 26% of towns reporting their 2010 financial situation to be “somewhat better” than in 2009. The top fiscal challenge reported by Colorado’s small towns are unfunded needs for basic infrastructure, including street maintenance and improvements, which can greatly affect when and how projects for bicyclists and pedestrians are implemented.

Nationally, the statistics are even more dire and the discrepancies between urban and rural environments are getting worse. Childhood obesity and inactivity are significant and growing problems in many rural areas where the prevalence of obesity and overweight has been shown to be 25 percent higher than urban rates, even after controlling for income, race, physical activity and other known risk factors. According to Rural Health Research & Policy Centers’ 2008 Health Disparities: A Rural – Urban Chartbook, residents in any rural county were more likely to report fair to poor health status than were residents of urban counties (19.5% v. 15.6%) and were more likely to be obese than were urban residents (27.4% v. 23.9%).
HEAL Challenges

This section examines what is known about healthy food access, physical activity and mobility in rural areas and small towns.

Healthy Food Access
Easy access to grocery stores where fresh produce is offered plays a vital part in one’s ability to eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables each day. In one California study, older adults in rural communities were found to be far more likely to be overweight or obese, physically inactive and food insecure than their suburban counterparts, as a result of physical isolation, poor walkability, higher rates of poverty and fewer food access choices. The importance of food production (one critical aspect of securing healthy food access) also emerges in Colorado; in DOLA’s County Land Use Survey Summary Report, smaller counties report their top two requested areas of technical planning assistance as “right-to-farm” and the “retention of agricultural land and water.”

Basic access to healthy food is proving to be a key determinant of health here in Colorado. According to 2009 Colorado Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey results, 36.3% of populations which do not have easy access to grocery stores or markets in their neighborhood are overweight and 21.9% are obese. The 2009 CO BRFSS data also shows that 28.6% of populations for which affordable healthy foods (fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads or low fat dairy products) are not available in their neighborhood are overweight and 28.3% are obese. In comparison, of those with “very available” or “somewhat available” access to healthy food retail, 19.1-23.3% are obese, respectively.

Physical Activity
The Fact Sheet for Rural Areas and Small Towns also points out that without easy access to safe places to be active, both children and adults are less likely to meet physical activity requirements. “Recreation has a central importance for the economic and cultural development of the Rockies”, according to the 2011 State of the Rockies report, and municipal interest in and support for parks and recreation remains strong. Of the respondents to the 2010 Colorado Municipal Land Use Survey from towns of 10,000 or less, 54% were engaged in policy work on parks and recreation and these topics continued to be among the top requests for technical planning assistance. The 2011 Colorado Municipal League State of Our Cities & Towns report showed that 30% of respondents from towns of 4,000 or less expected an increase in expenditure for parks and recreation, trails and open space.

Additional resources are clearly needed. According to the 2009 Colorado BRFSS data, 24.7% of community members who do not have access to public exercise facilities, such as walking or running tracks, basketball or tennis courts, swimming pools, or sports fields in their neighborhood engage in physical activity of 1-149 minutes per week (equivalent to an average of 21 minutes or less per day). Of significant importance, 36% of these community members (who lack access to public exercise facilities) are overweight and 23.8% are obese, compared an obesity rate of 19.4% for those who do have access to these types of facilities. The 2009 BRFSS data also showed that 37.1% of community members who had not been to a park, playground or public open space in the past 30 days, reportedly engage in physical activity only 1-149 minutes per week (which does not meet current recommendations) and 37.4% of them are overweight and 25.5% are obese, compared to an obesity rate of 18.1% for those who did use these types of facilities.

Mobility
Also highlighted in Fact Sheet for Rural Areas and Small Towns is the fact that 60% percent of rural areas have public transportation service. In Colorado, the most commonly reported development charges or impact fees leveraged, even by small counties, continues to be for transportation, according to the County Land Use Survey Summary. According to the Fact Sheet, demand for more options is also growing nationally; rural and small urban public transportation systems experienced a 20% rise from 2002 to 2005. Just as in urban areas, public transportation trips usually begin and end as walking trips. Creating safe walking, bicycling and public transportation options for rural residents builds a more livable, accessible community for people of all ages, abilities, and income levels.

The importance of this infrastructure is underscored by the data. The 2009 Colorado BRFSS data also shows that 23.6% of community members who do not have access to sidewalks or shoulders of the road that are sufficient to safely walk, run or bike (smooth surface, wide, well-maintained) engage in physical activity of 1-149 minutes per week (equivalent of 20 minutes or less per day on average), and 35.1% of them are overweight and 25.8% are obese, compared to an obesity rate of 19.5% for those who do have access to these types of facilities. Additionally, 25.1% of community members who do not have access to parks or trails in their neighborhood only engage in physical activity of 1-149 minutes per week (equivalent of 20 minutes or less per day on average).

The Colorado Municipal League State of Our Cities & Towns report also shows that 30% of respondents from towns of 4,000 or less expected an increase in expenditure for parks and recreation, trails and open space.
**Scan of Initiatives and Common Themes**

In an attempt to identify common themes and issues within rural communities that pertain to HEAL and the built environment, an inventory was taken of community listening notes, technical assistance notes, survey results and other reports and assessments. A full list of resources is available in Appendix B. It is important to note that this was not a scientific scan, but rather a “snowball” approach, asking communities and state entities to identify others who have conducted local assessments or surveys. Many of the responding communities had similar funding streams which likely contributed to the identification of some common themes.

**Common Themes Among Successful and Challenged Initiatives in Local Communities**

Hot topic projects, initiatives, issues and challenges were common across rural areas, with communities reporting similar strategies, but with varying degrees of challenge and success. Additionally, the factors that determine whether these strategies are successful or not are very similar. **Table 2.1** outlines popular strategies and approaches. Adequate access to the following factors tends to lead to successful initiatives, while the lack of access creates challenges:

- Basic infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, paved roads, even water/sewer systems)
- Time, money, staff, expertise
- Partnerships and communication between local governments, business owners, community advocates
- Relevant measures of effectiveness, systems to track progress, research to guide and support work

In many communities, these factors influence one another. For example, communities with a strong coalition of local advocates appeared to have strong connections to their government partners and business owners. Therefore, they were able to leverage additional resources and bring in technical assistance for community decision makers, as well as supplemental funding. Communities facing challenges experienced a breakdown in one or more areas which seemed to have a ripple effect on the rest of the project.

**Regional Differences**

In general, themes and trends could not be simply categorized by certain regions of the state. Trends were more determined by what infrastructure, tax base, staff and other resources exist in a community, no matter its location. Community listening sessions from resort towns did reveal additional, unique concerns. Support for greater infrastructure seems more available in resort towns; however, residents are concerned about seasonal populations, neighborhoods that empty out during certain parts of the year and the effect this has on community initiatives. In addition, there appears to be a greater lack of access to affordable housing and healthy food in resort towns, due to the seasonal cycles of businesses and populations.

**Table 2.1: Local Project Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Area</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Food Access</td>
<td>Local Food Production</td>
<td>Local production on public and private land, water preservation, season extension infrastructure, semi-permanent year-long markets, farm-to-school, community gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthy Food Retail</td>
<td>Increase access to full-service retailers and WIC/SNAP at certified food retailers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity</td>
<td>Indoor Recreation Facilities to support year-round physical activity</td>
<td>Recreation centers, facilities, and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outdoor recreation facilities that support year-round physical activity</td>
<td>Utilize natural features (rivers, lakes, canyons, etc.), link open spaces, towns, and bike ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Community Joint Uses</td>
<td>Safe-routes to school, joint use of facilities (rec, kitchen, transportation, gardens)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Sidewalks, bike paths, bike lanes, community transit options, complete streets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
State Agency Snapshot

Even for a well-established local government or organization, mapping out all the various players that set or implement funding, policies, rules, and regulations concerning HEAL efforts can be challenging. There are myriad agencies, divisions, and departments at every level of government that affect how the built environment impacts access to healthy foods and active living.

For those working to advance access to healthy food, physical activity and mobility, there is no set checklist of who to go to, who oversees what types of activities, or who must be involved from a regulatory perspective. There are some usual suspects and key partners, such as Colorado Department of Transportation and its Transportation Planning Regions (TPRs), the Department of Local Affair’s Regional Managers, Colorado State Parks, public and environmental health departments, local planning, community development and park and recreation agencies, and higher education institutions. However, there are also a surprising number of others, who play a significant role in influencing this work. See Figures 2.2 – 2.4 for state and regional entities involved in HEAL, and a map of various entities and the roles they play in promoting healthy food access, physical activity and mobility.

Figure 2.2: State Agency Connections to Healthy Food Access

Figure 2.3: State Agency Connections to Physical Activity

Figure 2.4: State Agency Connections to Mobility
The recommendations presented in this section are intended to represent systemic and sustainable ways that rural communities can integrate access to healthy eating and active living in their built environments. These recommendations are complemented by a second set of recommendations in Section 4 and six overarching strategies in Section 5 that are directed towards nonprofits, foundations and agencies working at the state level.

These recommendations are informed by the data and key themes presented in earlier sections of this Guide and reflect the most commonly mentioned ideas from key informant interviews, report scans and data collected through local projects, agencies and organizations. The evidence base is still limited in this field, but where it exists it has been incorporated.

The recommendations are presented in three categories as listed below. However, it is important to note that most of these recommendations are not independent; they can have a positive impact on both healthy eating and active living.

### Healthy Food Access
1. Identify, Preserve, and Promote Land for Human Food Production
2. Make Every Kitchen A Community Kitchen
3. Promote Healthy Food Retail of All Shapes and Sizes

### Physical Activity
4. Create Centers of Activity – Through Existing Facilities
5. Develop Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

### Mobility
6. Support Trail Building and Regional Connections
7. Support Fun and Functional Biking

As discussed previously, these recommendations should be viewed as a menu – not a recipe. It is not expected that every recommendation will resonate with each unique community; however, it is intended that collectively they will spark additional interest and action by those who read them.
Healthy Food Access Recommendations

1. Identify, Preserve, and Promote Land For Human Food Production

“….A healthy and sustainable food system is critical to supporting statewide quality of life, economic competitiveness and ecological vitality”

Background

Colorado is rich in agricultural resources - from dairy and beef, to peaches, beets and millet. Ironically, many rural areas that are located in the heart of rich agricultural lands are facing complex issues of consistent, easy access to healthy foods, and even locally grown foods. While Colorado has vast amounts of land under agricultural production and produces a tremendous amount of food, the state faces a number of challenges. Both inadequate water supply and long, cold winters have a limiting effect on the potential for food production in many areas. Needed infrastructure, such as food processing facilities and local distribution mechanisms, are often missing to keep food grown in the region where it is grown. Also, a greater diversity of food products is needed to provide residents with healthy, balanced diets. The impact of weather on getting food to mountain communities is another reason for developing a stronger local food system.

Whether on the Eastern Plains or Western Slope of Colorado, there is a well-established interest in developing local and regional food systems that provide food for rural communities, help grow local and state economies and reconnect residents to their food systems. It has been heard loud and clear that there is an interest in understanding how to devote what land is available to producing healthy food for area residents. This interest takes many forms – from shared or community gardens in the hearts of small towns; to keeping (or bringing back) young farmers to maintain small, regional family farms; to growing more commercial agriculture to feed markets in Denver and elsewhere within our state.

The issues vary – from an interim use for a community garden on vacant, town-owned land, a short-term lease for a new vegetable farmer, or the future of large landholdings of retiring farmers. No matter the scale, there is a clearly established need to identify more means for achieving permanency.

Land-Link, A Project of Guidestone
Chaffee County Colorado

Land-Link is a program of Guidestone that connects retiring farmers and ranchers as well as absentee landowners with next generation farmers. Guidestone is a non-profit organization dedicated to the integrity of the agricultural resources of the Upper Arkansas River region by fostering a local food economy, stewarding agricultural lands in production, educating for ecological literacy, and supporting sustainable development.

Through Land-Link, Guidestone assists with crafting lease and equitable agreements between the landowner and the farmer in order to provide economically viable options for landowners that keep the agricultural heritage and water on their land intact. The program also supports beginning farmers through an educational curriculum with a strong emphasis in financial planning, marketing strategies, business plans, food policy, legal issues, and production techniques. For more information please visit: www.guidestonecolorado.org.
Opportunity
This recommendation builds on several ideas in LiveWell Colorado’s Food Policy and Built Environment Blueprints - promote land use that incentivizes food production, preserve open space for food production and support the preservation of agricultural lands. It also advances recommendations relating to increasing local, healthy food production from the Centers for Disease Control, Institutes of Medicine and National Convergence Partnership.

While we understand that there is increasing competition for water and a growing need for agricultural labor, this Guide examines only one of the necessary pieces of the puzzle – the land.

How do we understand what is even possible, permitted, or legal in our own communities to prioritize land for local, healthy, human food production? What are the opportunities for finding and securing more land for food production, without jeopardizing already-established agricultural markets that contribute greatly to our state’s economy?

The legal, regulatory, land use and tax mechanisms that might promote more local agriculture and more farming and ranching for local or regional (or even in-state) consumption vary county by county across the state. How do we help stakeholders understand and navigate these realms effectively?

Lastly, connecting more people to the land for food production – whether through community gardens in town squares or large farming operations – is not only a powerful means for developing local self-sufficiency and reliance, but is also an effective and consistent means for people to be physically active. Gardening and farming are healthy ventures in many ways.

Community-Level Action Strategies
• Build partnerships with local, state and national land conservation advocacy groups, land trusts, and conservation financing groups to explore ways in which local food production including accessory uses (e.g., energy-efficient greenhouses) can be integrated as a priority in conservation efforts.
• Work with funders to request, pilot and learn from land acquisition and other physical infrastructure projects (e.g., energy-efficient greenhouses and other season extension infrastructure), then share process and success with other funding entities to encourage funding for land/capital acquisition projects.
• Through local government, work to create and incentivize food production, distribution and marketing when updating land-use policies.

Community Resources & Partners
When thinking about preserving and promoting additional lands for food production in your region, some typical stakeholders and partners may come to mind. Table 3.1 provides a few specific examples of groups already working in Colorado. Communities can also take stock of who else might be working in their region. Examples include:

- **Funders** - land conservation organizations; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development offices
- **Local advocates** - agricultural advocacy organizations; food policy councils; community coalition
- **Implementation partners** – land link or land transfer programs; land use lawyers; local land trusts; local coordinating councils
- **Researchers** – land grant universities and local community colleges and their students/faculty
- **Technical assistance providers** - beginning farmer training programs; organizations providing county and municipal land use technical assistance; CSU extension agents; regional councils of government
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Agency</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Local Advocacy</th>
<th>Research</th>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Land trust that serves farmers and ranchers; provides resources for landowners interested in conservation easements</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.ccalt.org/">http://www.ccalt.org/</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Municipal League</td>
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<td>Description: Provides advocacy, information, and training for Colorado’s cities and towns on a wide array of issues affecting budget and operations; represents municipal interesting in the legislature;</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.cml.org/">http://www.cml.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado State University - Dept. of Agriculture &amp; Resource Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Faculty provide expertise in agricultural economics and marketing, natural resource and environmental economics; includes undergraduate and graduate programs; Partners with CSU Extension to develop Local Food Systems Newsletter and other assistance provided through Extension/Outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://dare.colostate.edu/">http://dare.colostate.edu/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado State University Extension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Provides information and education, and encourage the application of research-based knowledge in response to local, state, and national issues affecting individuals, youth, families, agricultural enterprises, and communities of Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.ext.colostate.edu/menu_ag.html">http://www.ext.colostate.edu/menu_ag.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Local Affairs - Regional Managers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Provides technical assistance to local governments; Acts as a liaison to state government; Conducts research on issues of interest to local governments; Provides technical assistance staff to all regions of the state</td>
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<td><a href="http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/fs/index.html">http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/fs/index.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Outdoors Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Uses lottery dollars to preserve, protect and enhance Colorado’s wildlife, park, river, trail and open space heritage; Provides conservation and open space grants; Manages comprehensive inventory of open spaces in the state</td>
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<td><a href="http://goco.org">http://goco.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidestone - Landlink</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Connects retiring farmers and ranchers as well as absentee landowners with next generation farmers; Assists with crafting the lease and equitable agreements between the landowner and the farmer</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.guidestoncolorado.org/Land-Link-Initiative">http://www.guidestoncolorado.org/Land-Link-Initiative</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ranchland Preservation Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Multiple local projects preserve productive agriculture and ranchland as part of their community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Developed the Sustainable Community Development Code Framework that includes model codes for preserving local food production</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.law.du.edu/index.php/rmlui">http://www.law.du.edu/index.php/rmlui</a></td>
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</table>
### Table 3.1: Examples of Community-level Partners and Projects in Colorado (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Website</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Trust for Public Land</td>
<td>Works with agencies and communities to conserve land for public use and benefit; Partners with rural counties and organizations for food production on open space</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tpl.org/">http://www.tpl.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service</td>
<td>Provides local assistance around water management, land conservation, economic development, and community sustainability; Many rural counties have USDA service center that co-locates NRCS, Farm Service Agency, Conservation Districts, and Rural Development</td>
<td><a href="http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/rcds.htm">http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/rcds.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade</td>
<td>Fosters a positive business climate that encourages quality economic development through financial and technical assistance provided in support of local and regional economic development activities throughout the State of Colorado.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/OEDIT/OEDIT/1162927366334">http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/OEDIT/OEDIT/1162927366334</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Make Every Kitchen a Community Kitchen

Background
Regardless of how much water, land and labor are committed to growing regional food, without the necessary handling, processing, preparation, packaging and distribution infrastructure to move those foods into Colorado marketplaces, local and regional food systems will not achieve their fullest potential for filling the plates of Coloradans with fresh, healthy foods and bolstering local economies. While this infrastructure may have existed in the past, regions from across the state have lost the means to support local food production as the food system has become increasingly globalized over the past several decades. Communities have lost opportunities to store, prepare, package and butcher local and regional products. Additionally, efforts to examine the job opportunities, health regulations and inspections, and land use have been slow.

Kitchens are often seen as opportunities to engage the broader community in handling and cooking foods; places for minimal handling and preparation of fresh produce (e.g., washing, cutting, bagging) for distribution into food pantries, schools and other institutions; facilities with equipment to process produce for year-round consumption (e.g., freezing, canning and drying); and opportunities for growers and farmers to expand their markets throughout the region and state. Identifying and developing more processing facilities was also often cited as a potential means to support more rural-urban linkages for farmers who want greater access to Denver markets, but whose product is first shipped far away for processing.

School-Community Kitchens
Colorado communities and schools are already partnering to support rural food access and nutrition by working hand-in-hand to help residents improve their own health through shared use of school kitchens. Examples of rural school districts with shared use kitchen policies include:

**Gunnison**: Gunnison has well developed guidelines, fee schedules and rules addressing the use of school kitchens.

For more information please visit: [http://policy.ctspublish.com/gunnison-casb/](http://policy.ctspublish.com/gunnison-casb/)

**Alamosa**: Alamosa’s Board policies specifically address kitchen and cafeteria use, policies, fee schedules and application process.

For more information please visit: [http://alamosa.k12.co.us/dist/assets/files/boardpolicies/K/KF-R.pdf](http://alamosa.k12.co.us/dist/assets/files/boardpolicies/K/KF-R.pdf)
Opportunity
Gaining traction through the rapidly growing local food movement, the concept of community kitchens – and the broader need for infrastructure to support the viability of local agriculture - has become a hot topic throughout the state. This concept was repeatedly mentioned in key informant interviews and is also stressed in recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and National Convergence Partnership concerning the development of regional infrastructure to support the processing and distribution of healthy foods.13

Community kitchens can take many different forms, but they commonly offer gardeners, farmers, specialty food processors and caterers an inexpensive place to conduct licensed-food processing activities. Users are charged for the time that they use the facility, which must be certified and pass regular inspections by local public health departments. The concepts laid out stress the opportunity for building infrastructure that supports the 10-year old, Future Farmer of America member who wants to sell his herbs at the local farmers’ market; the collective or community gardeners who would like to donate or sell minimally-processed produce from their gardens; as well as the large landholder who would like more streamlined access to Denver markets for his or her grain or cattle products.

Recently, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) examined the potential for shared use of public school facilities. CDPHE has found that shared-use kitchens provide an innovative avenue for schools to encourage and engage students and communities in taking responsibility and interest in their own health. School districts around the country are beginning to use their kitchens as community and industry incubators, providing additional economic and educational opportunities to people in need. Farmers, students, parents, professionals, entrepreneurs and teachers all can benefit from shared use of school kitchens. CDPHE offers the necessary support, information and technical guidance that schools need to forge ahead and implement shared-use school kitchens in an effort to support community-based health education and activities.14

This recommendation focuses on one potential approach to improving infrastructure – that of promoting community and commercial kitchens for use by food producers of all shapes and sizes. The first step is to identify what kitchen facilities already exist throughout the state that may be easily used for this purpose. Although it is ultimately desirable and economically necessary to build new facilities that connect our food growers, farmers and ranchers to more markets, it is well understood that this is an expensive undertaking and one that is unlikely to secure significant grant or government funding at this time. The longer-term vision includes complementary efforts to strengthen regulation and inspection of community facilities and to develop processing facilities, particularly for meat, that go beyond what can be handled in a community or commercial kitchen.

Community-Level Action Strategies
- Inventory existing facilities - including senior centers, nursing homes, restaurants, granges, churches and places of worship, community colleges, schools, recreation centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, and others to identify potential partners; articulate the primary community goals (e.g., economic development support for local farmers, or more fresh produce into schools and food pantries, etc.); and identify what equipment and licensing are available and when facilities are currently operated.
- Use existing financing mechanisms such as Historic Preservation Tax Credits, the Main Street Four Point Approach or other special districts to encourage the redevelopment of existing properties.
- Develop policies that encourage, formalize and define joint-use agreements between public, private and nonprofit organizations and agencies.

Community Resources & Partners
When thinking about identifying diverse facilities in your community to expand food preservation and processing opportunities, some typical stakeholders and partners may come to mind. Table 3.2 provides a few specific examples of groups already working in Colorado. Communities can also take stock of who else might be working in their region. Examples include:
- **Funders** - USDA Rural Development and Natural Resources Conservation Service
- **Local advocates** - agricultural membership and advocacy organizations; food policy councils; community coalitions
- **Implementation partners** – school districts; co-op development organizations; community nutrition and cooking programs
- **Researchers** – researchers (examining food hubs or centralized facilities) and other students/faculty from universities and community colleges
- **Technical assistance providers** - local public and environmental health departments; land grant universities; CSU Extension; economic development councils; Small Business Development Centers; Chambers of Commerce
Table 3.2: Examples of Community-Level Partners and Projects in Colorado

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Agency</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Local Advocacy</th>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment - Healthy Living Branch</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description: The HLB provides technical assistance to communities and partners, conducts research on best practices in state and local policy initiatives, convenes regional and state-wide meetings and issues policy and data reports on a range of obesity prevention topics; Developed community guidance on school-community shared use facilities; Staff positions cover both nutrition and food policy</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/COPAN">www.cdphe.state.co.us/COPAN</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado Small Business Development Centers (CSBD) Network</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Provides counseling and training for small business across the state</td>
<td><a href="http://www.coloradosbdc.org/">http://www.coloradosbdc.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>County Public Health Departments</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description: All counties are served by county or regional public health departments that provide technical assistance, community services, training and monitoring for health and environmental issues, including food safety</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/opp/localist.html">http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/opp/localist.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CSU Extension - Family &amp; Nutrition Services</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Provides information and education, and encourage the application of research-based knowledge in response to local, state, and national issues affecting individuals, youth, families, agricultural enterprises, and communities of Colorado</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ext.colostate.edu/menu_nutrition.html">http://www.ext.colostate.edu/menu_nutrition.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CSU Department of Agriculture &amp; Resource Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Faculty provide expertise in agricultural economics and marketing, natural resource and environmental economics; Includes undergraduate and graduate programs; Partners with CSU Extension to develop Local Food Systems Newsletter and other assistance provided through Extension/Outreach</td>
<td><a href="http://dare.colostate.edu/">http://dare.colostate.edu/</a></td>
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<td>Real Food Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Assessing and implementing food hubs to bring fresh produce to schools across Colorado</td>
<td><a href="http://www.realfoodcolorado.com/">http://www.realfoodcolorado.com/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Convenes the state-wide School Policy Indicators Group (for school shared-use issues)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/centers/RMPRC/about/Documents/SPI%20workgroup%20purpose.pdf">http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/centers/RMPRC/about/Documents/SPI%20workgroup%20purpose.pdf</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Provides local assistance around water management, land conservation, economic development, and community sustainability; Many rural counties have USDA service center that co-locates NRCS, Farm Service Agency, Conservation Districts, and Rural Development</td>
<td><a href="http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/rcds.htm">http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/rcds.htm</a></td>
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3. Promote Healthy Food Retail of All Shapes and Sizes

Background
Throughout the interviews and literature review for this Guide, two somewhat opposing points of view where often heard – one that many people choose to live in remote areas and expect to lack convenient access to grocery stores and food retail, and the other lamenting the fact that people in rural communities and small towns only have access to convenience stores with unhealthy foods or a super store 30 miles away. There seems to be a general acceptance of needing to travel a significant distance to get groceries, as the concept of a “neighborhood grocer” does not fit in low-density areas. However, there is also a common desire to have access to places that provide fresh, healthy, affordable food and to have more opportunities to support one’s own local economy.

The built environment and transportation have been implicated in the rise of obesity and have direct impacts on food distribution to rural and small communities. Large supermarkets and distributors do not generally provide service to rural communities due to lower population numbers, a lack of consumer demand, higher transportation costs and low return on investment.

Opportunity
Funders, government and community organizations have been giving increasing attention to communities across the country that lack access to consistent, high-quality, affordable, fresh, healthy foods. A growing number of resources are being developed to help communities understand their food retail environment, as well as resources to advocate for new and healthy food retail, and more.

While some communities may be in dire need of a full-service grocer, others may be looking for more smaller-scale, dispersed places to access fresh foods throughout their region. There may be many existing facilities that can be used for increasing healthy food retail, without building new or expensive facilities. The ideas presented here represent a spectrum of healthy food retail opportunities – from within buildings (through vending), out into main streets, neighborhoods and beyond.

Walsh Community Grocery Store, Inc.

“Watching main street businesses close up is demoralizing, and the whole community begins a downward spiral”

As stated by the mayor of Walsh, Colorado when the only grocery store closed three months after the only drug store closed.

Instead of standing by and watching their economy crumble, town business leaders decided to create a volunteer team to lead the opening of a locally owned and operated community grocery store. They offered shares for $50 each to the community and ended up with 300 shareholders contributing close to $200,000.

The rest of the money they needed came in the form of a 10-year no-interest USDA-Rural Development loan, granted through the Southeast Colorado Power Association, for $160,000 to stock the shelves and get the store up and running. Currently, sales top $1 million a year. Several articles have been written about the store’s success.

For more information see: http://www.ojc.edu/pressReleaseDetail.aspx?prID=833
Community-Level Action Strategies

- Identify common vending companies serving a community and advocate for healthy food options in schools, workplaces, hospitals and other institutions. Ideally, this should be part of a broader “healthy food access” campaign.
- Work with existing retail sites, such as small markets and convenience stores to stock and promote more fresh and frozen produce and culturally-relevant healthy foods through “healthy convenience store” initiatives.
- Work with partners such as schools, governmental agencies, hospitals and workplaces, to develop local or regional purchasing co-ops.
- Identify and survey community agencies and partners who may have storage and refrigeration facilities and/or land that could be committed to supporting healthy food retail. Examples might include:
  - Schools or other institutions such as community colleges and hospitals that purchase fresh foods and have consistent deliveries to develop “school CSAs” that bring together excess available produce purchased by the school with produce from surrounding farms to supply to local residents. This may also require working with local planning and public/environmental health departments to address any retail and health regulations.
  - Parks, recreation centers, Boys and Girls Clubs or other places of community activity, along with local farmers and/or food distributors to establish weekly produce stands, CSA drops, food pantry drops or mobile vending.
  - Existing food distributors, food pantries, meal delivery services and community/senior transit providers to assess the potential for mobile retail to reach populations with little or no access to cars or public transportation.

Community Resources & Partners

When thinking about promoting new healthy food retail opportunities of various scales, some typical stakeholders and partners may come to mind. Table 3.3 provides a few specific examples of groups already working in Colorado. Communities can also take stock of who else might be working in their region. Examples include:

- **Funders** – local businesses; community foundations; state health foundations; USDA Rural Development
- **Local advocates** - hunger and nutrition groups; food policy councils
- **Implementation partners** – school districts; grocery store and convenience store owners; farmers/farm stands; real estate developers
- **Researchers** – university public health departments; local community colleges
- **Technical assistance providers** – local public and environmental health and land use departments; business associations and districts; small business development centers; co-operative development centers; economic development councils
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Agency</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Implementation Partner</th>
<th>Local Advocacy</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Technical Assistance</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Colorado Health Foundation</td>
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<td>Description: Commissioned a report by The Food Trust assessing Colorado’s grocery gap; Has funded local food access and healthy food retail efforts</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.coloradohealth.org/studies.aspx">http://www.coloradohealth.org/studies.aspx</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment - Healthy Living Branch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: The HLB provides technical assistance to communities and partners, conducts research on best practices in state and local policy initiatives, convenes regional and state-wide meetings and issues policy and data reports on a range of obesity prevention topics; Staff positions cover both nutrition and food policy; Provides guidance for food safety and food handling</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/COPAN">www.cdphe.state.co.us/COPAN</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: All counties are served by county or regional public health departments that provide technical assistance, community services, training and monitoring for health and environmental issues, including food safety</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/opp/locallist.html">http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/opp/locallist.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Walsh Community Grocery Store</td>
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<td>Description: Eastern Colorado grocery that was re-opened by community business leaders and co-owned by community members who opt in to buy small shares</td>
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<td>Hunger Free Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: An anti-hunger organization leveraging the power of collaboration, system change, policy change, and social change to end hunger in Colorado.</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.hungerfreecolorado.org/main.html">http://www.hungerfreecolorado.org/main.html</a></td>
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</table>
Healthy Food Access - Other Resources

- Center for Rural Affairs, Beginning Farmer & Rancher Opportunities [http://www.cfra.org/resources/beginning_farmer](http://www.cfra.org/resources/beginning_farmer)
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States, July 2009 [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5807.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5807.pdf)
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States, July 2009 [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5807.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5807.pdf)
- Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (includes a guide on establishing EBTs at rural produce markets and a “StoryBank” on regional, rural initiative to promote healthy food access) [http://www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes_programs/CCROP/index.shtml](http://www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes_programs/CCROP/index.shtml)
- Kansas State Rural Grocery Store Sustainability Initiative [www.ruralgrocery.org](http://www.ruralgrocery.org)
- USDA Food Hubs Tactical Team [http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/foodhubs](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/foodhubs)
Overview
Over the last 18 months, a robust partnership of local organizations, community members and county staff in Summit County has shaped a meaningful set of draft revisions to the county code in support of community-based agriculture. The overall purpose of the code revisions is to clarify types and intensities of agriculture that is permitted among various land use designations within unincorporated Summit County. The Partnership is being led by the Summit County Food Policy Council, with direct support from Summit Prevention Alliance, the High Country Conservation Center and staff at Summit County Planning Department.

While fully drafted, the proposed amendments have not yet been considered by the county commissioners for adoption. If passed, the amendments would apply to unincorporated portions of the county; however, all its municipalities would have the option to modify their codes in similar fashion. Moreover, all towns within the county are aware of the proposed amendments and several staff from these towns have attended related public meetings. In a sense, the proposed amendments are already a countywide effort.

The Spark
Several things, when taken together, sparked formation of the partnership and completion of the draft amendments. First, the LiveWell Colorado Food Policy Blueprint was released in early 2010 and served as a critical educational and promotional document. Also in early 2010, the Summit County Planning Director attended the National Partners for Smart Growth Conference, which included several sessions on planning for local food systems. Later in 2010, based in large part on community-based support and interest (e.g. - several local families called the Planning Department asking about keeping chickens or starting gardens on their property), the Summit County Senior Planner started working on the draft code amendments. Furthermore, a Comprehensive Health Needs Assessment indicated that there was very much a need for affordable, healthy food in Summit County.

The convergence of these factors demonstrated the value and need in examining the county’s regulatory framework and changes that could possibly be made to support urban agriculture.

Key Targets for Change Identified Through Food Policy Council
As the momentum behind this issue increased, one of the meaningful outcomes was the formation of a local food policy council. Based on a high level of interest, knowledge and motivation, the Summit Prevention Alliance and the High Country Conservation Center officially created the Summit County Food Policy Council in January of 2010. In general, the council includes individuals from the community, nonprofit representatives and Summit County staff members that have a strong interest in how food is produced, processed and distributed.

The Council identified three main focus areas: health and nutrition; local and environmental benefits; and food security, access and hunger. Through these focus areas, the council aimed to address and accomplish the following goals:

1. Amend the county zoning code to support urban agriculture, with an emphasis on acquiring permanent land for local food production (community greenhouses and gardens).
2. Identify viable sources of local and nutritious food for schools, including the use of local produce (grown on site or grown locally) in the lunchroom.
3. Support hunger relief through growing and acquiring healthy food to supplement local food banks.

Urban Farming Task Force
The formation of an Urban Farming Task Force was one of the key developments under the food policy council. The task force primarily consists of community members, many of whom are young adults. There are currently over 50 community members on the task force. Advocacy and support are the leading functions of the task force. While the group no longer regularly convenes, they are on ‘stand by’ to attend final hearings and provide supportive testimony. More specifically, the task force is currently focused on development and implementation of the #1 policy recommendation in the LiveWell Colorado Food Policy Blueprint:

“Local land use policies that allow and incentivize food production, including home-based and community food production and urban agriculture.”
Keys to Success
While the proposed amendments have not been formally adopted, many successes have already been achieved by the partnership that gave form to them. Keys to achieving a notable degree of success thus far include the following:

1. Hearing from and Building Support within the Community – Well-informed and meaningful comments and feedback on the proposed code amendments have been received from community members at public meetings, as well as through an online comment form on the project website. The task force also set up an on-line (support) petition during development of the proposed amendments. To date, approximately 200 signatures have been obtained, including 102 via the on-line format.

2. The Power of Partnerships – Food systems work, including policy and regulatory change, requires deep and ongoing collaboration. The model partnership developed through this effort connects Public Health (Summit Prevention Alliance), Environment (High Country Conservation Center) and Government (the Summit County Planning Department).

As staff members with LiveWell Summit County, have said, “Get as many players and partners together as you can that work on food access. Exploring the interest and capacity of partner or sister agencies at the front end of an initiative is key. The Summit Prevention Alliance could not have done this on its own.”

3. A Robust and User-Friendly Web Presence – The High County Conservation Center, with input from the Partnership, developed a highly informative website in early 2010 that is devoted to the issue of sustainable and local food in Summit County. Available at http://www.highcountryconservation.org/sustainable_foods.htm#urbanfarming, the site’s featured content includes, but is not limited to, The Latest on Community Gardens, Local Food, & Policy, Urban Farming in Summit County, and Sustainable Food Resources and Links. Throughout development of the amendments, the site provided a clearinghouse of useful information on pertinent meetings, recent developments and a reference sources relating to community agriculture. In addition, the site includes a link to the online petition to support the amendments.

Implementation
Due in large part to staff reductions and turnover in Summit County in the fall of 2010, consideration of the proposed amendments has not moved ahead as originally planned. While there is no set date, it is believed that the draft amendments will go to the County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners for approval in the fall of 2011.

Related Resources and Opportunities
1. For additional information on the Summit County Food Policy Council, the Urban Farming Task Force, or the draft code amendments, please visit: http://www.highcountryconservation.org/sustainable_foods.htm#urbanfarming
2. If you wish to join the Food Policy Council or the Urban Farming task force, email food@highcountryconversation.org.
3. If you wish to sign the online petition in support of urban farming in Summit County, please visit: http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/support-summit-urban-farming/
Physical Activity Recommendations

4. Create Centers of Activity – Through Existing Facilities

Background
One of the primary “wish list” items heard from rural communities across the state was a recreation center – even a simple one, in an accessible location in the county. A recreation center can range in the variety and types of amenities from a single multi-purpose room or a small weight/cardio room, to a comprehensive aquatics center, gymnasium, climbing wall, etc. Those communities that have a recreation center rave about its popularity and importance in encouraging residents to be physically active. This enthusiasm is consistently supported by the research; the presence of recreation centers is associated with greater rates of physical activity by residents of diverse ages and incomes. Indoor recreation facilities are especially important in Colorado, where some places have only two months without snow fall and others experience extreme weather conditions in summer as well as winter.

Opportunity
It is commonly recognized that recreation centers are expensive to build and to maintain. Even the most popular and well-used facilities in Colorado receive some degree of municipal support. Building a new facility is not an economically viable option in many communities today, or it may be the case that capital dollars are available but there is not sufficient funding for ongoing operations and maintenance. Developing sustainable facilities is challenging and is often not just a design or facility-based issue, but is often strongly tied to programming and community-appropriate pricing structures. Communities are recognizing the value in starting with what is already available and are gaining a better understanding of existing resources and how to engage in effective shared-use agreements. Schools are often the first partner that come to mind, but are often heavily used. Therefore, this recommendation stresses the many opportunities to create spaces and places for primarily indoor physical activity.

School-Community Recreational Facilities

As with shared kitchens, several school districts have opted to open up their facilities to the community when not in use to provide more opportunities for physical activity for all residents.

Moffat School District (NW Colorado): Moffat encourages the use of school facilities when there is no interference with the regular school program. The school administrators felt “the schools belong to the people of the School District.” Moffat regulations provide a clear fee schedule, policies and application for user groups. For more detail see: http://moffatsd.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/homepagefiles/cms/500599/File/policies/1330FacilityUseReg.pdf

Mancos School District: http://mancos.schoolfusion.us/modules/groups/homepagefiles/cms/499687/File/Public%20Forms/FACILITIES%20USE%20REQUEST.pdf

Community-Level Action Strategies

- Inventory all spaces in the community that have the potential to be used for indoor physical activity. Think broadly and include transitional spaces such as business or facilities that are vacant; indoor and outdoor spaces; locations for existing programs that attract large numbers of residents, such as a summer food program, family and youth programs, etc.
- Work with schools, churches and places of worship, clubs, senior centers, and other community institutions and their staff to open gyms, rooms for exercise classes and swimming pools for use by all residents “after hours” and during the summer or other closures.
- Work with hospitals, schools, family centers, churches and other community institutions to build, expand, enhance or maintain facilities on their grounds that enable physical activity -- including trails and paths, par courses (outdoor fitness trails with stops and equipment), skate parks, playgrounds and gardens -- and promote their availability to the community.
- Identify year-round uses for facilities that may house seasonal activities (e.g., summer camps, ice skating rink and aquatics facility, etc.).
- Use existing financing mechanisms such as Historic Preservation Tax Credits or the Main Street Four Point Approach or other special districts to encourage the redevelopment of existing properties.

Community Resources & Partners

When thinking about finding and enhancing community recreational facilities, some typical stakeholders and partners may come to mind. Table 3.4 provides a few specific examples of groups already working in Colorado. Communities can also take stock of who else might be working in their region. Examples include:

- **Funders** - redevelopment financing; bonds; local parks and recreation fees and taxes
- **Local advocates** - youth and parent groups; parks and open space groups
- **Implementation partners** – all community facilities; sports teams; family and youth centers; health care centers; school districts; universities and community colleges
- **Researchers** – state and local public health researchers
- **Technical assistance providers** - public interest lawyers; local planning and parks departments
Table 3.4: Examples of Community-Level Partners and Projects in Colorado

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Agency</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Implementation Partner</th>
<th>Local Advocacy</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Technical Assistance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) Grant Program supports school construction and can support new recreational facilities</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/CapConstBEST.htm">http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/CapConstBEST.htm</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment - Healthy Living Branch</td>
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<td>Description: The HLB provides technical assistance to communities and partners, conducts research on best practices in state and local policy initiatives, convenes regional and state-wide meetings and issues policy and data reports on a range of obesity prevention topics; Developed community guidance on school-community shared use facilities</td>
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<td>Colorado Rural Health Centers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Colorado STRIDES Program collaborates with local residents to assess, plan, and implement local programs to maintain the healthcare workforce and the sustainability and livability of Colorado’s small towns; Works in tandem with communities to assess community needs and help plan for them, including recreational facilities</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.coruralhealth.org/programs/strides/">http://www.coruralhealth.org/programs/strides/</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Public Health Practice-Based Research Network</td>
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<td>Description: Connects evidence-based research with practitioners across the state; Collects and disseminates information on best practices to promote physical activity</td>
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<td>Kaiser Permanente Community Benefits Division</td>
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<td>Description: Invests in policy and environmental change initiatives across the state to promote healthy eating and active living; Initiates state-level policy and assessment efforts</td>
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<td>Orton Family Foundation</td>
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<td>Description: Heart and Soul Community Planning Guidebook and Guides help communities assess their values and initiate, and implement, community planning that will sustain their rural areas; Contains guidance of recreation and other quality of life values</td>
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<td>Great Outdoors Colorado</td>
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<td>Description: Uses lottery dollars to preserve, protect and enhance Colorado’s wildlife, park, river, trail and open space heritage; Conservation and open space grants; Manages comprehensive inventory of open spaces in the state</td>
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<td>Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center</td>
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<td>Description: Convenes the state-wide School Policy Indicators Group (for school shared-use issues)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/centers/RMPRC/about/Documents/SPI%20workgroup%20pur-">http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/centers/RMPRC/about/Documents/SPI%20workgroup%20pur-</a> pose.pdf</td>
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5. Create Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Background
Rural and small communities are often spread out over large sections of land that are characterized by small populations and land uses that do not provide a significant tax base to support physical activity infrastructure such as parks, athletic facilities, open space and trails. Additionally, these limited resources restrict the type and number of recreation programs and activities that municipalities or counties can staff or provide. In some rural communities, there is no dedicated staff or funding for outdoor recreation facilities or activities. It is also important to consider that since the economic recession began in 2008 there is a lack of current or expected development and most communities do not have the opportunity to collect developer impact fees for these purposes.

A common theme amongst rural and small communities, whether agricultural, developing, resort, or a boom and bust community, is a lack of funding to not only develop new outdoor recreation facilities, but to also to maintain existing facilities. Many of these facilities were developed and equipment was installed in the 1970’s when there was an increase in federal funding for parks and recreation or as communities experienced population growth and fees and taxes increased. However, in recent years most communities have not had the money to update facilities and replace equipment to meet current safety and ADA accessibility standards. The lack of resources to fund outdoor recreation facilities, equipment and recreation staffing greatly limits the number of opportunities that rural and small town residents have to engage in physical activity.

Opportunity
Nevertheless, there are opportunities to utilize and leverage existing resources through partnerships, collaboration and joint-use. Most rural and small communities recognize their limited resources and are increasing efforts to work with other government agencies, community organizations and nonprofits to develop outdoor recreation facilities and services. Even beyond their own communities, there is an increasing trend to a regional approach to share facilities with neighboring communities.

For those communities that are categorized as “developing” and are expecting future population growth and development, an extremely important opportunity is to ensure that the codes and ordinances enable municipalities to receive adequate and quality parkland and recreation amenities as development occurs. Yet, the challenge is making sure these outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities are sustainable and that there are adequate resources to operate and maintain these facilities once they are developed. Therefore, it is especially important to evaluate both traditional and alternative funding sources to better maintain facilities.
Community-Level Action Strategies

- Increase community partnerships and collaborations through the development of joint-use facilities and use agreements with schools, community non-profits and faith-based organizations.
- Establish a regional approach to providing outdoor recreation opportunities, such as through the development of more regional facilities (e.g., parks, sports and athletic facilities, open space) and recreation programs (e.g., athletic leagues, fitness classes) through partnership contracts, intergovernmental agreements or memorandums of understanding.
- Develop and/or strengthen policies, codes and ordinances for park, open space and trail dedication to specify the type and amount of parkland, standards for amenities, location, sitting required investment, etc.
- Evaluate and establish funds for deferred maintenance (e.g., dedicated sales or property, increased mill levy, maintenance fees, special tax assessment districts, sponsorships)
- Utilize parks and recreation facilities and programs to support the community’s economic vitality through activities such as heritage and recreation tourism, agritourism, corporate sponsorships and naming rights, etc.

Community Resources & Partners

- When thinking about finding and enhancing community recreational facilities, some typical stakeholders and partners may come to mind. Table 3.5 provides a few specific examples of groups already working in Colorado. Communities can also take stock of who else might be working in their region. Examples include:
  - **Funders** - local parks and recreation fees and taxes; redevelopment financing; bonds; grants; sponsorships; donations
  - **Local advocates** - youth and parent groups; parks and open space groups; athletic organizations; specialized recreation user groups
  - **Implementation partners** – neighboring communities; local school district; community organizations; recreation user groups; developers; economic development groups
  - **Researchers** – state and national planning and physical activity experts and organizations
  - **Technical assistance providers** – state and local planning, parks, recreation, open space and public works departments; expert citizen volunteers
Table 3.5: Examples of Community-Level Partners and Projects in Colorado

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<tr>
<td><strong>Colorado Department of Local Affairs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Provides a resource guide of parks and recreation planning standards specifically for small communities (&gt;10,000 people) in Colorado.</td>
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<td><strong>National Park Service</strong></td>
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<td>Description: The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects.</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/">http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Colorado State Parks</strong></td>
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<td>Description: Provides park-specific publications including relevant grants, market research, fact sheets, design guidelines, etc.</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.parks.state.co.us/News/Publications/Pages/Publications.aspx">http://www.parks.state.co.us/News/Publications/Pages/Publications.aspx</a></td>
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Physical Activity - Other Resources

- Active Living Research, Rural Active Living Research Assessment Tools. http://www.activelivingresearch.org/node/11947
- American Planning Association, Planning and Community Health Research Center http://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/health/parks.htm
- Center for Cities & Schools http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/Partnerships_JU_Aug2010.pdf
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States, July 2009 www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5807.pdf
- Colorado State Parks, Colorado’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) http://www.parks.state.co.us/Trails/LWCF/SCORPplan/Pages/SCORPplan.aspx
- PolicyLink http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136685/k.2F85/Land_Use_and_Community_Health.htm
- Public Health Law & Policy http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/increasing-physical-activity
Case Study - Breckenridge Promotes Physical Activity Through a Complete Streets Policy

Overview
For many communities in Summit County, including Breckenridge, active living is a defining part of the local ‘culture.’ Convenient access to biking, skiing, hiking and boating often stand out as key attributes to a high quality of life. Walking, although not often highlighted, is also a leading form of recreation and physical activity in these communities. Moreover, walkability and how it is affected by the built environment, has a notable effect on quality of life in Summit County and in other rural and mountain communities throughout the state.

As such, LiveWell Summit County commissioned Walkable Communities Inc. to conduct a county-wide walking audit in 2009. Inclusive of Breckenridge, Dillon, Frisco, Silverthorne and Summit County, the purpose of the audit was to examine walkability within these communities, identify existing assets and constraints, and present community-specific recommendations for the future. A community audit team set out on foot and took hard look at the built environment and its effects, both good and bad, on walkability in these communities.

A Common Grounding
Following the completion of each community’s audit, LiveWell Summit County hosted a community open house to showcase the results. Understanding that education, capacity-building and collaboration were essential ingredients to furthering walkability in Summit County, the Alliance invited local elected officials, planners, public works staff, private engineering firms, landscape architects and community leaders from all participating communities.

The open house was a highly valuable education opportunity that brought together a variety of disciplines to learn more, ask questions and analyze specific recommendations. The open house also illuminated that walkability at the local level requires partnerships between staff and experts in design, construction, operation, maintenance, community education, safety and enforcement.

Moving to Implementation
In Breckenridge, the town’s volunteer Sustainability Task Force and Town Council reviewed the report recommendations. Several of them supported implementation of complete street concepts, through which cyclists, pedestrians and transit could be better accommodated throughout the circulation network. Demonstrating the value of multi-disciplinary collaboration, the Task Force and Council reached out to staff from the town’s Planning, Engineering, Open Space and Public Works Departments to strategize on a course for implementing the recommendations. As result of this collaboration, many of the improvements recommended were implemented within 12 months of the audit’s completion. Improvements included new bike lanes, bike routes with sharrows, additional on-street parking and bulb-out pedestrian crossings.

Building on this collaboration and expanded capacity among staff, key players continued implementing complete street improvements. Capitalizing on the community’s interest in and support for the evolving sustainability plan, SustainableBreck, key players integrated the program into the plan and used the plan’s development as a platform to further educate residents on the benefits of complete streets. A series of complete streets concepts, policies, goals, and objectives are identified in the SustainableBreck Plan’s transportation section.

Regulatory Refinement
Building on the capacity, education, and outreach already discussed, Town Council formally adopted a complete streets policy in January 2011. The policy recommends that a majority of streets located within the core of the town and routes to outlying neighborhood centers be modified (during any redesign) to accommodate a variety of users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders. In addition and consistent with this policy, there are several provisions in the town code that support implementation of complete street concepts through the development review process.
Keys to Success

1. **Building on Local Support** – Many Breckenridge residents and visitors understand and deeply appreciate how active living and walkability contribute to a high quality of life. Successful adoption of the complete streets policy and construction of related improvements built upon a community sentiment largely in support of active living.

2. **Collaboration** – Conducting a collaborative open house after the audit’s completion provided a forum through which stakeholders and other interested parties could reach a common ground on what it all meant through asking questions, raising concerns and expressing support.

3. **Education** – Successful realization of the complete streets policy required the active involvement of an educator / advocate who steadily carried the ‘walkable communities’ message to key stakeholders, including but not limited to; Town Council, the Sustainability Task Force, planning, engineering, open space and public works staff. This champion performed the critical role of presenting the concept and its technical aspects and explained how enhanced walkability would benefit the community over the long term. Through this education, the necessary ‘buy in’ was developed so that when the policy was ultimately considered by Town Council, the key players were fully in support.

4. **Technical Assistance** – Key members of Breckenridge Town staff attended the Colorado Department of Transportation’s (CDOT’s) bicycle and pedestrian design training in 2010 and 2011. Through these trainings, local staff developed additional technical capacity and a better understanding of the state’s recommended practices.

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**Project Sustainability**

Prioritizing funding for Complete Street improvements in the Capital Improvement Fund will be key to long-term success. In Breckenridge, as in all jurisdictions, adoption of supportive policies and regulations are important pieces of the puzzle; however, establishing a funding source is an equally important component when considering long-term sustainability.

**Related Resources**


2. Final Draft of 2011 SustainableBreck Sustainability Plan available at: www.sustainablebreck.com
Mobility Recommendations

6. Build Trails that Support Regional Connections and Mobility

Background

Coloradans love trails. River walks, nature walks and regional trails have in recent years been popular projects. They are often well-used and tend to be very effective at promoting physical activity. Whether walking to commute or get around town, strolling for pleasure or walking for vigorous exercise, walking is the easiest and most universal means for people to move their bodies more. Developing community infrastructure for walking as a means to promote health is strongly recommended by the Centers for Disease Control. Trails and paths often provide places for other types of activity as well – biking, Nordic skiing and horseback riding - and can be made accessible for many types of assisted mobility devices, such as wheelchairs.

While most people would think of Colorado as a state with a vast trail system, the need for more places to walk for exercise, fun and simply to get where you need to go was a very common theme heard from the communities in developing this Guide. Historically, many rural communities and small towns have not prioritized the infrastructure that allows for safe walking environments, such as sidewalks, painting/striping and signals along busy and high speed country roads. In addition, the larger regional trail networks sought by many communities require outside investment and often involve multi-jurisdictional collaboration, all of which can complicate and slow development.

Opportunity

This recommendation focuses on building trails to promote physical activity that are also functional for users. Comments were often heard such as, “we don’t want trails to nowhere!” Trails and infrastructure that support pedestrian activity can play significant roles in supporting a community’s connectivity to essential destinations, such as schools, parks and community facilities, and increasing overall mobility for residents (e.g., how easily can residents get from point A to point B with a variety of transportation choices?). This question is especially important for children who often only have access to places where they can walk or ride their bikes.

An important aspect of this recommendation is to integrate walking and biking as reliable and safe modes of transit. The strongest community approaches will focus on overall mobility and connectivity. While community transit is not called out in this Guide, it is recognized that motorized transit and human-powered transit are related and essential parts of our transit system. To find out more about community transit, please see the Local Action Strategies to Advance HEAL in the Built Environment on page 20.
or mobility system. A strong comprehensive regional vision should integrate them all. Motorized transit is vital for moving children and youth, people with disabilities, and older adults particularly in lower density communities and is necessary to ensure all residents have adequate access to healthy food retail and places for physical activity and recreation. Particularly in resort communities, a strong transportation plan that integrates bus and rail is also critical to easing traffic congestion and improving quality of life.

This recommendation recognizes that focusing solely on new infrastructure, policies and ordinances does not provide connectivity for a large portion of most communities and may not be as impactful in the short-term during this economic recession. Therefore, it is important to also encourage stakeholders to “start with what they have” and explore options to build off of existing projects, to look for connectivity, and think about low-cost visual cues that make trails and paths a well-used component of the community’s infrastructure.

**Community-Level Action Strategies**

- Conduct a community connectivity assessment of needs and opportunities to understand (1) where are primary areas of activity, (2) where are the best opportunities to connect residents with key destinations, and (3) what form of connectivity is needed to accommodate the community’s residents (e.g., are there a significant number of residents who are older adults or who use assisted mobility devices?).
- Assess local policies and ordinances for adequate requirements for parkland and trail Right of Way dedication or fees-in-lieu.
- Create a sense of community trails everywhere by initiating “indoor trails” – safe and attractive staircases and hallways that also lead to outside trails and paths.
- Anchor local and community trails on institutional grounds, such as a path around the hospital grounds or the school yard that is linked by signs or painting to the stairs or hallways inside.
- Expand trails out from existing facilities (e.g., from the path around the hospital) through sidewalks, signage, paintings/striping, and other visual and physical cues that link to other longer regional trails.
- Identify uniquely “rural” opportunities for trail expansion (e.g., from town-owned trails, along ditches, rivers, on federal lands) and work with ditch and utility companies to support trails within their easements.
- Work with local businesses to map and advertise a local trails system, including sidewalks that increase their window traffic.

**Community Resources & Partners**

When thinking about expanding regional connectivity through trails, some typical stakeholders and partners may come to mind. Table 3.6 provides a few specific examples of groups already working in Colorado. Communities can also take stock of who else might be working in their region. Examples include:

- **Funders** - land conservation and land trust groups
- **Local advocates** - pedestrian and bicycle groups; youth and parent groups; trail building groups
- **Implementation partners** – large community institutions (schools, hospitals, community colleges); ditch and utility companies
- **Researchers** – state and local public health researchers
- **Technical assistance providers** - transportation agencies and councils; public works staff or contractors; planning and community development; public and environmental health; parks and open space; Army Corps of Engineers (especially if in floodplains)

**Regional Connectivity by Trails**

“Distances between rural communities certainly make walking and bicycling more challenging. A good trail system that links neighborhoods with rural routes and downtown destinations in nearby communities can serve as a recreational or tourism resource as well as a commuter route that is protected from higher-speed roads. Trail systems have been shown to provide economic and social benefits to adjoining areas.”

Source: Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities, published by ICMA and EPA
http://www.epa.gov/dced/sg_rural.htm
Table 3.6: Examples of Community-Level Partners and Projects in Colorado

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Agency</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Implementation Partner</th>
<th>Local Advocacy</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Technical Assistance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Army Corps of Engineers</td>
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<td>Description: Reviews and approves trails and other projects near rivers and wetlands; Assists with needed construction in riparian areas</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.usace.army.mil">http://www.usace.army.mil</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Conservation Corps</td>
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<td>Description: State-wide programs that assist trail-building efforts with volunteer groups and other technical assistance</td>
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<td>Colorado Department of Natural Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: State’s primary entity for conserving and managing water, land, state parks and natural resources; Assists with land preservation for parks, open space, and recreation</td>
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<td><a href="http://dnr.state.co.us/Pages/DNRExternal.aspx">http://dnr.state.co.us/Pages/DNRExternal.aspx</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment - Healthy Living Branch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: The HLB provides technical assistance to communities and partners, conducts research on best practices in state and local policy initiatives, convenes regional and state-wide meetings and issues policy and data reports on a range of obesity prevention topics; Staff include physical activity and built environment specialists</td>
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<td>Colorado Department of Transportation - Bicycle and Pedestrian Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: State’s program that provides policy, regulatory, and development guidance for integrating bicycles and pedestrians in road and trail development; provides extensive resources for communities on integrating non-motorized transportation</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/bikeped">http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/bikeped</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Plateau Mountain Biking Association</td>
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<td>Description: State’s voice for mountain biking through trail building, advocacy, and fundraising</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.copmoba.org/">http://www.copmoba.org/</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Public Health Practice-Based Research Network</td>
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<td>Description: Connects evidence-based research with practitioners across the state; Collects and disseminates information on best practices to promote physical activity</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.publichealthalliance.org/researchnetwork">http://www.publichealthalliance.org/researchnetwork</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Trail Foundation</td>
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<td>Description: Funding arm that supports volunteer crews that maintain the Colorado Trail</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.coloradotrail.org/">http://www.coloradotrail.org/</a></td>
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<td>Colorado Youth Corps</td>
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<td>Description: Provides volunteer crews that participate in trails and open space projects</td>
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<td>Great Outdoors Colorado</td>
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<td>Description: Uses lottery dollars to preserve, protect and enhance Colorado’s wildlife, park, river, trail and open space heritage; Provides conservation and open space grants; Manages comprehensive inventory of open spaces in the state</td>
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<td>Rocky Mountain Youth Corps</td>
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<td>Description: Provides volunteer crews that participate in trails and open space projects</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.rockymountainyouthcorps.org/">http://www.rockymountainyouthcorps.org/</a></td>
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<td>Table 3.6: Examples of Community-Level Partners and Projects in Colorado (cont.)</td>
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<td><strong>Transportation Planning Regions</strong></td>
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<td><em>Description:</em> Coordinates regional planning efforts; Collaborates with Engineering Regions; Coordinate regional planning and policy</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/statewide-planning/mpo-rural-planning.html">http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/statewide-planning/mpo-rural-planning.html</a></td>
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<td><strong>Weld County Trails Coordination Committee</strong></td>
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<td><em>Description:</em> Local example of a coalition that provides guidance and guidelines for a coordinated county-wide trail system</td>
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7. Support Fun and Functional Biking

Background

Strong community infrastructure for bicycling is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and other national entities. Efforts to make bicycling more universal, however, face some unique challenges. In Colorado, bicycling is often seen as a rugged sport (e.g., hard-core mountain bikers) or vigorous and competitive exercise (e.g., triathletes training in the foothills and mountains). Mountain biking and long-distance road biking are great, fun activities, and Colorado is rife with opportunities, but these are forms of active living that can be intimidating and unrealistic for many people to pursue.

In many rural and small communities, bicycling is not commonly accepted as a way to get around town. This is certainly due in part to safety concerns, such as the fact that small towns are often divided by busy state highways and county roads with small shoulders and large truck traffic. However, there also seem to be some cultural norms at play. Throughout the development of this Guide there were echoes of the same story across the state (with the exception of resort and tourist communities that are built around activities such as biking) – that biking for utilitarian purposes is just not what people do. People who do cycle to work are pulled over by concerned neighbors saying: “Honey, do you need a lift? Did your car break down?” There also seems to be an acceptance of car-dependence in rural areas; many people choose to live far distances from work, services and amenities for their quality of life. In addition, there is a sense of pride in car ownership; if someone has worked so hard to afford their own car, why would they not drive it?

Another challenge is the low priority and lack of resources for bicycling infrastructure that is apparent in all communities, rural or urban, when so many other transportation projects need attention including basic road maintenance, bridge maintenance, road widening, etc. LiveWell Colorado’s Built Environment Blueprint identified the lack of communication and collaboration between state and local transportation agencies as a barrier to local implementation of multi-modal design and infrastructure. Another recent report that examined the expenditure of transportation funding on bicycle and pedestrian projects found significant disparities in how communities use funds for multi-modal transportation projects. Rural, poor and less-educated communities are less likely to have received funding or to have implemented bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Alternative (and Fun!) Bicycle Commuting and Tourism

Park Your Tractor! A 5th-generation rancher in Routt County had a change of heart, literally and figuratively, about his lifestyle after experiencing a massive heart attack. Instead of driving between his vast landholdings, he began biking from field to field as much as he could.

Bicycle Tourism! State Highway 96 from Pueblo to Kansas is part of TransAmerica Cycling Route, a route from San Francisco to DC! The rural communities along the route have tourism revenue coming in from cyclists biking through town. They received National Park Service support to donate NPS staff time to improve bicycle friendliness along the corridor. Now you see small towns with populations of 200 people getting travelers spending money in their shops. For more information: http://www.santafetrailscenicandhistoricbyway.org/prprarietal.html

Explore Colorado by Bike - Bike the Byways! Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways provide a beautiful way to see all that Colorado has to offer. Twenty five byways vary from breathtaking mountain passes to majestic plains to winding gravel roads and trails. Visit their website for more information: http://www.bikebyways.org/Byways/
Opportunity
This recommendation promotes thinking first about potential lower-cost improvements to integrate bicycling into all communities and regions as a way to support mobility, connectivity, transit and health. Biking can be fun, pragmatic, affordable (very fuel efficient!) and available to people of all ages. It can also be an alternative, not just to motorized transit, but also to walking. For example, with greater distances from home to school in most rural communities, a “biking school bus” may be a more effective Safe Routes to School program than a “walking school bus”.

In addition to helping make bicycling a cultural norm, this recommendation also highlights the need for practical resources to build biking infrastructure. Policy guidance and support, funding, cross-sector collaborations and design guidelines are all critical to seeing built environment changes.

Community-Level Action Strategies
- Assess community connectivity needs and opportunities, similar to the idea for “trail development”.
- Implement low-cost improvements that convey a culture of bicycling for functionality - to get where you need to go. This might include signage of bike routes, striping and painting, street lighting, visible bike racks at all businesses and transit stops and maps of where one can safely bike.
- Work with area businesses and economic development councils to bring bicycling retail, including parts and repair stores, suppliers, and trainers, to small towns.
- Integrate health, social service, business, economic development, and other stakeholders in the Transportation Planning Region commission and/or other transportation advisory boards or councils (http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/statewide-planning/mpo-rural-planning.html).
- Work with CDOT Engineering and Maintenance to plan for and develop adequate shoulders along roads to ensure cyclists’ safety.
- Work with local ditch and utility companies, as well as local land owners, to gain access to the right-of-way parallel to water bodies in order to develop trails.

Community Resources & Partners
When thinking about creating more bicycling opportunities in your region, some typical stakeholders and partners may come to mind. Table 3.7 provides a few specific examples of groups already working in Colorado. Communities can also take stock of who else might be working in their region. Examples include:
- **Funders** - land and open space funders
- **Local advocates** - bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups; mountain biking associations; trail associations
- **Implementation partners** – transportation agencies and councils; Local (Transportation) Coordinating Councils
- **Researchers** – university public health departments; community college students/faculty
- **Technical assistance providers** - planning and community development; public works staff contractors; engineering staff or contractors; public and environmental health; parks and open space
### Table 3.7: Examples of Community-Level Partners and Projects in Colorado

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Agency</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Implementation Partner</th>
<th>Local Advocacy</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Technical Assistance</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bicycle Colorado</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: The State's voice to promote bicycling and bicycling safety and conditions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment - Healthy Living Branch</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Colorado Department of Transportation - Bicycle and Pedestrian Division</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Colorado Public Health Practice-Based Research Network</strong></td>
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<td>Description: Uses lottery dollars to preserve, protect and enhance Colorado's wildlife, park, river, trail and open space heritage; Provides conservation and open space grants; Manages comprehensive inventory of open spaces in the state.</td>
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<td><strong>Local Bicycling Advocacy Groups</strong></td>
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<td>Description: Local fundraising, build trails, and advocate for bicycle awareness and safety.</td>
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<td><strong>Transportation Planning Regions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Coordinates regional planning efforts; Collaborates with Engineering Regions; Coordinate regional planning and policy.</td>
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</table>
Mobility - Other Resources

- Active Living Research, Rural Active Living Research Assessment Tools. [http://www.activelivingresearch.org/node/11947](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/node/11947)
- American Planning Association, Small Town and Rural Planning Division [http://www.planning.org/divisions/smalltown/index.htm](http://www.planning.org/divisions/smalltown/index.htm)
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States, July 2009 [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5807.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5807.pdf)
- Context Sensitive Solutions Case Studies [http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/case_studies/](http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/case_studies/)
- Pedestrian and Bicycling Information Center [http://www.walkinginfo.org/](http://www.walkinginfo.org/)
- Rails to Trails Conservancy Community Case Statements [http://www.railstotrails.org/ourwork/advocacy/activetransportation/campaignforactivetransportation/case_statements.html](http://www.railstotrails.org/ourwork/advocacy/activetransportation/campaignforactivetransportation/case_statements.html)
- Rural Transportation [www.ruraltransportation.org](http://www.ruraltransportation.org)
- Small Town and Rural Planning Division – American Planning Association [http://www.planning.org/divisions/smalltown/index.htm](http://www.planning.org/divisions/smalltown/index.htm)
- US EPA Rural Smart Growth (resources, case studies, awards) [http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sg_rural.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sg_rural.htm) [http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/awards.htm](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/awards.htm)
- Walkable and Livable Communities Institute [http://www.walklive.org/](http://www.walklive.org/)
Overview

Florida Road is a major east-west arterial that connects a large portion of La Plata County to the City of Durango. The road is one of the busiest city-maintained streets in Durango accommodating between 12,000 and 14,000 vehicle trips daily. It provides a critical link between public schools, Fort Lewis College, downtown Durango, recreational amenities, tourist destinations, services and a future community garden. Local school-aged children from all neighborhoods south and east of the road must use it or cross it when walking or bicycling to local elementary, middle or high schools.

Because of its strategic location in town, its high degree of use and its deteriorating condition, the city targeted Florida Road for a rebuild project and has successfully converted a 3.3-mile section into a Complete Street. Through bond measure funding, the road has been rebuilt as a Safe Route to School, including clearly designated five foot bike lanes (a different pavement color from the traffic lane, plus striping), a 10-foot wide multi-use sidewalk, landscaping for traffic calming, pedestrian islands and new crossings and signals including a pedestrian-triggered crossing for school children. In its new form, it better accommodates a variety of users and modes, including pedestrians, cyclists, buses, the disabled and automobiles.

Setting the Foundation through Education, Advocacy, and Capacity Building

Starting in 2008, Healthy Lifestyle La Plata (HLLP), a LiveWell Colorado community, began meeting one-on-one with city councilors, the city manager, city planners and engineers, the city’s Multi-modal Coordinator and Director of Public Works to inform them about “Complete Street” concepts and how their implementation on the Florida Road corridor could benefit its many users. Concurrently, HLLP led meetings with community-based bicycle and pedestrian groups to identify shared interest and goals, coordinate efforts, and form a coherent message on improving Florida Road.

In addition, HLLP invited a national expert on Complete Streets, Dan Burden (The Walkable & Livable Communities Institute, www.walklive.org), to town. The purpose was to educate stakeholders and decision-makers about Complete Streets and how the community could be made safer for bicycles and pedestrians. Leveraging this opportunity for capacity building among key players, HLLP invited local elected officials, planners, public works staff, private engineering firms, landscape architects and other community leaders to the session.

Here We Go – Going Public with Effect

In early 2010, the city presented its plans for the Florida Road project at a public meeting. In an impressive display of grass roots public involvement, several community stakeholders participated in the meeting including Bicycle Friendly Durango, Healthy Lifestyle La Plata, Trails 2000, the Safe Roads Coalition, the Durango Wheel Club, and the Ironhorse Bicycle Classic. Community advocates pointed out to city engineers that the concept plan provided little or no accommodation for bicycles, pedestrians, students, transit buses or people with disabilities. Based on this well-informed input and outreach previously conducted by project advocates, the city engineers went back to the drawing board and revised the concept to better address the needs of a variety of modes and user groups. The revised outcome was a project design much more aligned with Complete Street concepts.

Keys to Success

Reaching the successful point of project implementation required efforts on many fronts. Keys to ‘getting there’, many of which would likely apply to your own community, included the following:

1. Educating Key Stakeholders Early And Often – Meeting one-on-one with city staff, the city manager, and elected officials was essential for building awareness and technical understanding, addressing individual concerns and galvanizing support among key decision-makers. In the end, these in-person meetings and the education they provided made a significant difference.

2. Consistent Advocacy – Two or more community-based advocates attended every public meeting held on the project to voice their support. These included public information and feedback meetings held by the city, as well as Planning Commission and City Council meetings.

3. Media Messaging – Project advocates wrote letters to the editor in the local paper supporting the project and linking the project to community health and safety for school children. These pieces helped further the community’s understanding of Complete Street concepts and why they made good sense along Florida Road.
4. **Understanding And Leveraging Community Sentiment** – Project advocates understood that many members of the community, including many parents, had a strong interest in providing students with safe routes for getting to and from school via foot or bike. In their messaging, outreach and comments at meetings, advocates carried this message forward.

**Challenges**

Any project of this nature will confront some challenges along the way. Overcoming reluctance on the part of some city staff to do things differently, effectively educating some key stakeholders, and overcoming initial community resistance to roundabouts (traffic circles) were some of the leading challenges. Through a persistent and well-informed education and advocacy campaign, many came to ‘see the light’ and got past their initial hesitation. Also, openly ‘airing’ and addressing concerns through public meetings and one-on-one meetings were an added impetus.

**Project Sustainability**

1. Healthy Lifestyle La Plata has maintained a high level of support for the project by attending on-going meetings, complementing city staff and elected officials on the project, and sent a complimentary letter to the editor of the local newspaper.

2. Healthy Lifestyle La Plata is also working on incorporating Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School language into both the new City Land Use Code and the County Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code. Integration of these into the City and County’s leading policy & code documents ensures that these concepts will be carried forward into other future projects.

3. Durango is steadily becoming known among residents and visitors as an active community and bicycling destination. The Florida Road project will support this unique, positive identity.

4. Within the last three years, due in part to HLLP advocacy efforts, both the city and county governments have created Multi-modal coordinator positions, which promote and support transit and active transportation in each jurisdiction. The city’s Multi-modal Coordinator is currently writing a Multi-modal Master Plan.

5. Healthy Lifestyle La Plata staff also serves on the city’s Multi-modal Advisory Board.

**Related Resources**

A link to City of Durango Public Works Department web page featuring the Florida Road Reconstruction Project, including construction plans, available at: [http://www.durangogov.org/ongoing/FloridaRoad.cfm](http://www.durangogov.org/ongoing/FloridaRoad.cfm)
LiveWell Colorado and partners at the state-level have an important role in supporting rural communities’ efforts to promote healthy eating and active living through changes in the built environment. Through the development of this Guide, a number of strategies were identified that would support multiple communities and thus are best addressed at a state-level and promoted for use by any community. These strategies are listed in Tables 4.1 – 4.3.

It will take more than just the expertise, resources and efforts of any single organization to put the recommended strategies into play. LiveWell Colorado will need to partner and collaborate with state agencies and organizations, including but not limited to the Colorado Departments of Agriculture, Local Affairs, Public Health and the Environment, and Transportation, Regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Governor’s Office and others to gather and make available resources to support local efforts. In addition, state-level nonprofits, foundations and government agencies must continually learn from local communities what strategies work and what new challenges arise and use this knowledge to inform their work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1: Food Access Recommendations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Production</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify model codes and regulations for local agriculture in rural and small town communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide community agriculture guides for rural and small towns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate the benefits of food production to local economies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify strategies for water preservation and allocation as well as land acquisition for food production purposes in rural communities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Kitchens</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a guide to community use of public kitchens (including sample MOUs, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a “how to” guide on community use of “commercial” kitchens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify policy and regulatory changes needed to allow, encourage and incentivize additional food processing facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Retail</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify model codes and regulations for healthy food retail in rural and small town communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate resources to support healthy food retail development in rural and small town communities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.2: Physical Activity Recommendations

**Recreation Facilities**
- Share recreation center case studies and best practices for development and maintenance
- Identify models to develop regional recreational facilities (including IGAs and financing mechanisms)
- Provide case studies and best practices for shared use of recreation facilities
- Establish a guide to community use of public recreation facilities

### Table 4.3: Mobility Recommendations

**Trails and Biking**
- Share case studies and best practices of local agencies working together to address transit, mobility and connectivity issues of small town and rural communities (including inter-regional)
- Aggregate resources to support mobility in rural and small town Colorado communities (e.g. Getting There Guide, CDOT Bike & Ped, trail development standards)
- Provide case studies and best practices to implement Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) in rural and small town communities
- Provide case studies and best practices for trail development along public and private lands
- Identify models to develop regional trail systems that cross jurisdictions (including model IGAs and financing mechanisms)
- Incorporate rural and small town considerations into Statewide Bike and Pedestrian Plan
- Establish a “Ride your bike” campaign that highlights rural and small town examples of bike commuting
- Integrate health “advocates” into transportation planning
- Evaluate the benefits of bike and pedestrian infrastructure to small town and rural economies
State-Level Recommendations

Overview
Bent Count and the City of Las Animas recently updated their 2002 Comprehensive Plan (Plan). Officially adopted in January 2011, the new plan is a solid example of how the principles of Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) can be integrated into a community’s leading policy document and help guide development and growth decisions for years to come.

The Initial Spark
The Plan update was inspired, in part, when the LiveWell Bent County (LWBC) Coordinator, Tammy Westerman-Pryor, attended a LiveWell Colorado Quarterly meeting in summer 2009. At this meeting, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Active Community Environments Coordinator, Jessica Osborne, gave a presentation on planning for HEAL at the local level. Due in part to the presentation, the LWBC Coordinator approached local stakeholders to suggest that the 2002 Comprehensive Plan be updated and include HEAL-based policies and strategies. Within a few months, the Las Animas mayor and Bent County commissioners gave approval to initiate a Plan Update.

Fueled by Existing Momentum
Positive momentum in Bent County and Las Animas was very much a factor in facilitating the Plan Update and the inclusion of HEAL principles within it. Conversations were already underway in Bent County relating to the desire for Safe Routes to School, student wellness, community gardens and planning for a trail project. The LWBC Coordinator and other key stakeholders strategically borrowed from this momentum, which reflected growing community support for healthy communities and a policy framework to support them.

Robust Partnerships – A Recipe for Success
Demonstrating the power of collaboration, several agencies took part in developing the model HEAL language for inclusion in the updated plan including the City of Las Animas, Bent County, Colorado Center for Community Development (CCCD), Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE), and LiveWell Bent County (LWBC).

Although city and county elected officials had the final say about what was to be included in the plan, CCCD was the consulting agency that worked closely with stakeholders during all phases of plan development. They researched, drafted and wrote the plan based on input received at community engagement sessions. CDPHE provided technical assistance and oversight. LWBC drove the process and participated in all aspects of the project.

In light of limited staff resources at the city and county, LWBC and CDPHE successfully leveraged the involvement of students from CCCD who were earning degrees in architecture and planning. For additional information on planning support available through CCCD’s Rural Technical Assistance Program, please visit: http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/ArchitecturePlanning/discover/centers/CCCD/RuralTechnicalAssistanceProgram/Pages/default.aspx

Community Engagement and Education
The Plan Update included a robust civic engagement component. From the beginning, process leaders stated that hearing from the community would be an essential ingredient to a successful update. Furthermore, community input was vital to informing the HEAL policies and objectives. Tammy Westerman-Pryor, says "Bringing the community together was one of the most valuable aspects of this process. It was a chance for community members to be proactive; to dream, to hope, plan, and to better position ourselves so that when dollars are available, we’re well positioned."

Community-wide visioning sessions, which were broadly attended, were the focal point of the outreach. The sessions, which were held over the course of a full week, included informational presentations by CCCD, small group exercises, review of key outputs and opinions and the display of several visuals capturing project progress to date, current status, and next steps leading up to completion. During each session, attendees were invited to provide input on key issues through various voting exercises. In addition to several community members, the mayor, mayor pro tem, county assessor’s office, and county commissioners attended the visioning sessions. These were a valuable opportunity for collaboration to occur across disciplines and interests and to establish a common ground on the content of the plan. Additional outreach tools through which valuable input was received included surveys (paper & online), phone calls and one-on-one interviews.
Key Targets for Change Identified and Refined through Community Input

Through the visioning meetings and other forms of outreach, key targets for change emerged to inform Plan updates. Among the leading issues relating to HEAL that helped shaped policies were trails, community gardens, parks and recreation, and access to healthy foods. All HEAL policies ultimately included in the plan were voted on and everyone’s vote counted equally. The thoughtful integration of HEAL principles into the Plan is captured in Table 2 of the Plan, “Connections to Health within the Comprehensive Plan.” Across a broad range of topics, this table sets forth 24 separate actions that should be pursued to improve community health concurrent with the Plan’s implementation.

Keys to Success

1. Youth Task Force - One of the unique and highly positive aspects of the plan update was the involvement of a youth task force. The task force, based on a Get REAL! coalition model, was formed in partnership with Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). All members of the task force were local youth from the Las Animas School District. While the task force was not specifically developed for the Plan Update, their input throughout the process was invaluable.

As said by Tammy Westerman-Pryor, “This collaboration provided “real world” application of life skills. This could potentially be “THE BEST” resource for rural communities struggling with budgetary issues across the board & a great tool to regain a population of young adults after college graduation.”

2. Walking Audit – During the plan update and as a supplement to the community visioning sessions, project leaders held walking audits in order to record detailed observations on ways that the community could be made more accessible for cyclists, pedestrians and the disabled. Community members participated and some members of the youth task force used walker devices and wheel chairs to determine how access could be improved for the disabled and seniors.

Project Sustainability

1. Implementation Checklist – The Plan’s Implementation Checklist includes discrete actions, timeframes, responsible parties and possible partners. It is intended to be used by elected officials, city employees and citizens alike to further the goals set forth in the plan. As Tammy Westerman-Pryor says, “This is quite probably one of the most ingenious ideas. A great tool for keeping on track!”

2. Related Follow up Efforts - A positive process and resulting momentum has allowed LWBC to work with the city and county on a second phase of the project to develop supplementary guidance document. These, in part, are feasible due to the successful communication, trust and technical capacity built up during the Comprehensive Plan update. The plans will include a Sustainable Open Space document and a Land Use and Transportation Plan. A kick-off meeting was held in May 2011 and community-based task forces were formed to focus on trails, green houses and gardens, and sidewalks. The guidance documents are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2011.

Related Resources

2010 Bent County and City of Las Animas Comprehensive Plan available through contacting Tammy Westerman-Pryor at twesterman@bcns.net.
In addition to the specific ideas presented in the previous sections to promote access to healthy foods, physical activity, and mobility in Colorado's rural and small town communities, six overarching recommendations were identified as opportunities for the collective “we” (i.e., LiveWell Colorado, state agencies, foundations, and nonprofits who are interested in promoting healthy eating and active living through the built environment) to more broadly, systemically and sustainably support and enable built environment strategies to promote health.

1. Coordinate Heal Efforts across State Governmental Agencies

This recommendation reflects an underlying need to create an environment in which incorporating health into the built environment is a cultural and political norm throughout the state. The ultimate goal is “health in all policies” – particularly, focusing on preventative measures including the promotion of healthy eating and active living – across all of Colorado’s agencies. The effort to advance healthy policies will only be as effective as the organizations from which those efforts emanate. Integration, coordination and diverse engagement across state agencies are critical to the accomplishment of this goal. Some example strategies of how this may be achieved include placing health advocates on advisory boards and commissions at every level across state agencies; ensuring agency staff reflect the skills, capacity and knowledge that is being asked of communities; and gaining a greater shared understanding of the various roles state agencies can play in promoting or inhibiting healthy eating and active living projects.

2. Integrate Heal into Existing Rural Technical Assistance

A common theme heard throughout the development of this Guide is to stay away from issuing new mandates or creating entirely new programs to “serve” rural communities and small towns. Instead, HEAL-focused entities should pursue opportunities to utilize existing resources for training, funding, and technical assistance, many of which have been working with rural communities for decades. For example, these organizations can work more closely with existing technical assistance providers to integrate key messages, resources, tools, and training around promoting access to healthy foods and active environments as part of existing community priorities.

In addition, it will be important to encourage collaboration, regular meetings, and communication among the primary entities working with built environment issues in rural Colorado (e.g., Department of Local Affairs, Colorado Counties, Inc., Colorado Municipal League, Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, CSU Extensions and Orton Family Foundation’s Heart & Soul Community Planning). Working with these partners to promote health through the built environment through pilot projects in rural communities will enable stakeholders to learn how best to integrate HEAL tools and inform future partnerships.

3. Integrate Heal into Comprehensive Planning

Throughout interviews for this Guide, stakeholders repeatedly requested “checklists” and “talking points” for how to begin integrating health into planning, rather than a blanket mandate. While there are a significant number of planning tools and processes (e.g., redevelopment, subdivision, special district, master, and other plans), integrating health into Comprehensive Plans specifically was most often mentioned as the place to start and make the biggest impact. Some strategies to advance this effort include working with existing training efforts (primarily the PLACE trainings) to enhance and disseminate a toolkit for the integration of health values, measures and outcomes into Comprehensive Plans in rural counties; creating a greater understanding of how and when to incorporate HEAL into the planning process; promoting the economic benefits of bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure or local food production and retail; and identifying communication resources for local communities to promote HEAL.
Overarching Strategies Needed To Advance This Work

Some existing resources include:
- Public Health Law & Policy’s How to Create and Implement Healthy General Plans
- American Planning Association’s Planning and Community Health Research Center and Small Town and Rural Planning Division
- Orton Family Foundation’s Heart & Soul Community Planning Handbook
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership’s PLACE (Planning for Active Communities) Training and the PLACE Handbook

4. Strengthen Funding Processes and Criteria that Reflect Rural Needs and Capacity

With strong consensus, the top need and wish list item named by rural community and small town stakeholders was “sustainable funding.” Yet, this issue is more complex than simply making additional grants available. For example, very few communities have the staffing, resources and long-term operations and maintenance funds to support built environment projects. Additionally, rural communities often feel at a disadvantage due to grant guidelines that reflect the capacity of urban areas (e.g., staff expectations and matching requirements). A typical example is a community that was not able to receive their Safe Routes to School grant award for several years because they did not have an engineer on staff as required by the grant.

How we can develop a rural funding and partnership strategy in Colorado that more accurately reflects rural needs, interests and capacities? Some strategies that may help address this challenge are greater coordination and streamlining across rural-funding entities (both public and private); increased communication between rural communities and funders; scaled matching funds; alternative means for measuring impact; pilot projects to inform future grant making; and additional assistance to rural communities for grant-writing efforts.

5. Spread Capacity, Advocacy and Leadership Development Efforts

Diverse opinions were expressed by interviewees regarding who the most critical stakeholders and influencers are for this work in rural communities. Residents are key for long-term solutions; policy makers experience a high level of turnover, but are in a position to make quick shifts in priorities; and staff are essential as the implementers. The take-away is that all of these stakeholder groups are crucial and leadership development opportunities for all can lead to a culture change in how access to healthy foods and active living environments are prioritized.

Key elements to support capacity, advocacy and leadership development include education through sharing best practices, case studies, increasing opportunities for trainings (e.g., grant writing, code development, economic analysis, etc.) and promoting strategies for incorporating HEAL in Comprehensive Planning.

6. Identify, Develop, and Collect Data and Indicators for our Rural Communities

One of the significant challenges for rural communities in competing for and securing funding is the lack of established data on their communities, which is often required by funders. In addition, the small numbers of residents in some rural counties make them immediately ineligible for some funding opportunities. When an entire county is one census tract, as is often the case in rural contexts, using census data is not effective for describing the population and understanding its unique traits. For some health indicators, entire groups of people in rural America, most notably American Indians, literally fall off the books because their populations are so small that data is not collected.

There is a need to look for new ways to collect information to effectively describe and understand rural populations in order to benefit local programs directly, as well as inform national and state financing and technical assistance for rural populations. For example, it is important to understand what data is available and what is missing to adequately tell the story of rural counties. This data should inform new evaluation criteria for existing grants or programs and be used to inform policy decisions. Lastly, policymakers and funders need to be further educated on the resources available to small and rural communities, as well as the value they provide to our state’s health and economy.
Overview
Bennett Colorado is currently updating its 1999 Comprehensive Plan (Plan). The updated Plan will set the town’s policy foundation and guide its growth and development decisions over a 25-year timeframe. The plan update is taking place, in part, through grants issued by the Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) under the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) Initiative and The Colorado Health Foundation.

Getting Around the Table – Community Engagement
The town held a kick-off meeting with project partners on March 24th, 2011 and a community workshop on May 12th. At the May 12th workshop, group exercises were conducted to receive front-end input and help shape the first two elements of the plan framework: the vision statement and guiding principles. Over the course of summer and fall 2011, three additional community workshops have been held with stakeholders including strategic partners, local residents and landowners. In addition, town staff will make presentations on the project to community organizations and provide exhibits at local events to obtain community feedback. An online survey will also be employed to collect citizen input.

In addition, Bennett has formed technical advisory committee consisting of staff Arapahoe and Adams counties and the City of Aurora. The counties are large stakeholders and their input will have a significant influence on the direction of the Plan. Further, staff from TCHD will provide input on best practices for inclusion of HEAL principles into the Plan.

Building on Existing, Local Support
Integration of HEAL-based policies into the Plan update is, in part, based on momentum built up in the Bennett over recent years. Members of the town board have been active participants in local forums and trainings focused on the nexus between a community’s health and its built environment. Through this involvement, key decision-makers have become increasingly aware of the value of creating healthy environments in their communities. In addition, the creation and adoption of Bennett’s first Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan in 2009 reflects the commitment of Town leadership to creating environments conducive to being active. Importantly, development of the 2009 Master Plan included public involvement, which raised local awareness and perhaps increased appreciation for how these amenities foster physical activity and benefit overall quality of life.

Getting Traction through Guiding Principles
At the May 12 community workshop, participants voted on a set of guiding principles. Several of them successfully capture an integration of health and the built environment. Those discussed for further refinement at future workshops that especially relate to HEAL include the following:

1. **Mix land uses**
   Develop town and neighborhood centers with mixed land use and greater land density to shorten distances between homes, workplaces, schools, shopping, places of worship, cultural facilities, and recreation and social activities.

2. **Create walkable neighborhoods**
   Offer access to open space, trails and parks to provide more opportunities for walking, biking, recreation and contact with nature.

3. **Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place**
   Expand small-scale agriculture and create outlets for fresh fruits and vegetables, such as community gardens and farmers markets.

4. **Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities**
   New development should be contiguous, or nearly so, to existing infrastructure and services.

5. **Provide a variety of transportation choices**
   Provide transportation alternatives including bicycle trails, sidewalks and mass transit to reduce the dependence upon automobiles, and create streets that are safe for use by automobiles, pedestrians and bicyclist.

6. **Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions**
   Remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth.

Implementation – Bringing the Vision to Reality
The updated Plan will include a monitoring matrix that includes priorities for action, timeframes for completion, and indicators, providing an accountability tool for evaluating progress toward accomplishing action items. As one of the catalyst actions is identified for a specific year, the action would be tracked until completion. The following example illustrates how this might be developed for Bennett’s Comprehensive Plan.
**Plan Theme:** Community Health

**Draft Achievable Goal:** To promote healthy eating and active living.

**Key Strategy:** Consider partnerships with Tri-County Health Department, LiveWell Colorado, the Colorado Trust and others as a model healthy community initiative.

**Catalyst Action:** Consider preparing a health impact assessment

**Policy Directive:** Consider policies that support the planning of active community environments

**Measurable Outcome:** Complete a health impact assessment for the Town of Bennett utilizing Tri-County Health as a partner.

In general, the Town of Bennett establishes an annual work plan for each year. The work plan is developed on a staff level led by the town administrator and then reviewed by the town board so everyone is aware of where resources are being directed.

**The Bigger Picture**

Looking at its efforts in relation to planning throughout the region and state, Bennett especially wants this project, and many of the HEAL principles emerging from it, to be used as a role model for other rural communities.

“We feel that what we will accomplish will be unique and a great model for using health as a prominent factor for achieving goals and developing subsequent policies that create a sustainable and healthy community.” (Trish Stiles, Treasurer and Management Analyst for Town of Bennett)

**Project Sustainability**

1. The most critical success factor will be fostering long-term buy-in and support from critical community partners, such as the School District, the Fire District, the Recreation District, strategic land owners, and the public.

2. Approval of Plan by elected officials and their initiative to continue moving forward with its implementation.

**Related Resources**

For additional information on the Bennett Comprehensive Plan Project including meeting summaries, draft document, and project schedule, please visit: http://www.plan-tools.com/Community/Meeting-Summaries.asp
Appendix A: Acknowledgements and Key Informant Interviews

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following individuals for their time reviewing the entire report in detail and providing invaluable feedback:

- Jim Isgar, State Director
  USDA Rural Development
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  Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center
- Monica M. Buhlig
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  Kaiser Permanente
- Monica Lyle, Program Officer
  The Colorado Health Foundation
- Jessica Osborne
  Active Community Environments Coordinator
  Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

For on-going review and feedback that informed and shaped the recommendations of this Guide, thank-you to staff at:

- Bicycle Colorado
- Colorado Department of Local Affairs-Division of Local Government
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- Colorado STRIDES
- LiveWell Communities
- The Orton Family Foundation
- Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments
- Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center

All of the interviewees and case study respondents listed in the following tables.

Thank you to several foundations, who gave their time and wisdom, including:

- Anschutz Family Foundation
- The Colorado Health Foundation
- El Pomar Foundation
- Gates Family Foundation
### National Informants

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities--Grant County, NM</td>
<td>Andrea Sauer, MRP, Project Coordinator</td>
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<td>Maine Rural Health Research Center</td>
<td>David Hartley</td>
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<td>Missouri Extension</td>
<td>Sarah Hultine</td>
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<td>Orton Family Foundation</td>
<td>Alece and Betsy Orton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redwood CAA – Humboldt Partnership For Active Living -- TCE funded</td>
<td>Noelle Melchizedek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Rural Development Center (Mississippi State University)</td>
<td>Bo Beaulieu</td>
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<td>Western Rural Development Center</td>
<td>Don Albrecht</td>
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### State Informants

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<td>Anschutz Family Foundation</td>
<td>Michelle Sturm</td>
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<td>Lyn Kathlene</td>
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<td>Eric Bergman</td>
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<td>Kyle Leglieter</td>
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<td>Colorado Department of Transportation</td>
<td>Betsy Jacobsen</td>
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<td>Martha Sullins</td>
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<td>Tony Hernandez</td>
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<td>Darlene Scott</td>
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<td>Matt Carpenter</td>
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<td>Tom Gougeon, Lisa Flores &amp; Beth Conover</td>
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<td>Kathy Underhill</td>
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<td>Norris Design (previously with)</td>
<td>Karen Ryan</td>
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<td>Open Space Program Director (GOCO)</td>
<td>Kathleen Saks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Consultant</td>
<td>Judith Berquist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMPRC staff</td>
<td>Julie Marshall, Jini Puma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky MT Farmers Union Co-op Development Center</td>
<td>Susann Mikkelsen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust for Public Land</td>
<td>Wade Shelton</td>
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### Regional Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Local Affairs Regional Manager</td>
<td>Don Sandoval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Local Affairs Regional Manager</td>
<td>Deb Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Local Affairs Regional Manager</td>
<td>Lee Merkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pikes Peak Council of Governments</td>
<td>Joe Hanke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-County Health Department, Environmental Health Director</td>
<td>Tom Butts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tri-County Health Department</td>
<td>Bill Mahar</td>
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### Local Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbey Winery, Canyon City</td>
<td>Sally Davidson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Salida</td>
<td>Michael Yerman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Community Food Systems</td>
<td>Jim Dyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Lifestyles La Plata</td>
<td>Jenny Wrenn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiveWell Chaffee County</td>
<td>Lisa Malde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiveWell Montezuma</td>
<td>JoDee Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiveWell NW and City Engineer from Public Works Dept</td>
<td>Barb Parnell and Janet Hruby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiveWell Prowers County</td>
<td>Emily Montoya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otero County Economic Development – Lower Arkansas</td>
<td>Bryan Bryant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Rec Division of the Wildlife Department, Southern Ute</td>
<td>Steve Whiteman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit County and LiveWell Summit</td>
<td>Joanna Rybak and Kristen Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weld County Public Health/LiveWell Weld</td>
<td>Bobbie Pucket &amp; Pam Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Fowler</td>
<td>Wayne Snider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Hayden</td>
<td>Kathy Hockett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Rifle</td>
<td>Mike Braaten</td>
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Appendix B: Colorado Scan Resources

Inputs to the Scan of Existing Rural and Small Town Surveys & Assessments

LWC Community Policy Report 2, December 2010

LWCO Community Health Initiatives Key Informant Interviews Aggregate Summary Report
- Alamosa
- Bent County
- Broomfield
- Durango – Healthy Lifestyles La Plata
- Fort Collins
- Fountain
- Prowers County/Lamar
- Pueblo County
- Summit County
- Teller County
- Westwood
- Wheat Ridge
- West Denver (WHEN-Denver Health)

LiveWell TA Calls, 2011
- Alamosa County
- Bent County
- Chaffee County
- Healthy Lifestyles La Plata
- Montezuma County
- Northwest Colorado
- Summit County

Built Environment Blueprints Forum Notes, 2010
- Alamosa/Chaffee County
- Bent County
- La Plata County/Durango
- Pueblo
- Summit County
- Steamboat Springs

Bottom-Up 2011 County Economic Development Summary
- All Rural Counties

Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center, Community Listening Session Notes, 2010
- Alamosa County
- Conejos County
- Costilla County
- Mineral County
- Rio Grande County
- Saguache County
- San Luis Valley

DOLA 2010 Land Use Survey Results

Colorado Rural Health Care Centers – CO STRIDES Community Assessments
- Delta County
- Garfield County
- Grand County
- Julesburg

Springfield RECAP Final Report
1. LiveWell Colorado’s policy blueprints can be found at www.livewellcolorado.org.


14. This material is culled from an unpublished draft of community guides from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment on the topics of community use of public school kitchen and recreation facilities. Expected publication date for these guides is fall 2011.

15. A program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, this approach is the foundation for local initiatives to revitalize their districts by leveraging local asset, from cultural or architectural heritage to local enterprises and community pride. http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach/

16. As defined by the USDA, CSAs, or Community Supported Agriculture “consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community’s farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or “share-holders” of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer’s salary. In return, they receive shares in the farm’s bounty throughout the growing season” http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml


18. A program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, this approach is the foundation for local initiatives to revitalize their districts by leveraging local asset, from cultural or architectural heritage to local enterprises and community pride. http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach/


21. Enhanced rail options was repeatedly mentioned by resort communities in the development of LiveWell Colorado’s Built Environment Blueprint

22. In some regions, such efforts to work with private landowners may not be realistic, but in Colorado and elsewhere there are new trends towards “Rails With Trails” where trails are built next to live tracks.


25. Colorado is already a bicycle-friendly state! See the League of American Bicyclists to see how many towns we have certified “Bicycle Friendly” and how our state rates overall in support of biking. www.bikeleague.org/

26. www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning
27. www.planning.org/nationalcenters/health